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AN

ANALYTICAL EXAMINATION

INTO THE

CHARACTER, VALUE, AND JUST APPLICATION

OF

THE WRITINGS

OF

THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS

DURING THE ANTE-NICENE PERIOD.

BEING THE

BAMPTON LECTURES

FOR THE YEAR MDCCCXXXIX.

BY

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J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON, LONDON.

MDCCCXXXIX.

PREFACE

In preparing to commit this series of Lectures to the judgment of the public, the Author cannot refrain from mentioning those circumstances connected with their composition, which may, in some measure, claim for them a more indulgent consideration. His name was not originally proposed as a candidate for the appointment which has called them forth; and was only suggested at the moment of election. He was thus necessarily deprived of that time for deliberation, which is usual before the final acceptance of such an office, and which might very probably have resulted in the conclusion,

Psyché elle espère son avenir.

On this unexpected call, the Author's choice of a subject was naturally directed to a line of

• Which for the first time, he had
seen & felt the power of

P R E F A C E.

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Perche alle spalle sue soverchia soma ^a.

On this unexpected call, the Author's choice of a subject was naturally directed to a line of

^a Milton, vol. iv. p. 183. ed. Oxford, 1824.

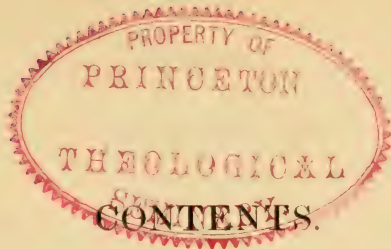
enquiry, which engaged at the time his private theological studies ; but he has since most sensibly felt the disadvantage of the very short interval allowed him for preparation, and has experienced, to an extent far beyond what he had anticipated, the difference between collections formed only for private satisfaction, and those which he could regard as sufficiently matured for public notice.

It appears the more necessary to submit the above statement of the circumstances connected with the Author's appointment to the office of Bampton Lecturer, and his selection of the subject here discussed, because a widely-circulated periodical journal has given currency to an erroneous impression, that the nomination was conferred and accepted with direct reference to prevailing controversies. But it must be sufficiently obvious from what has been said, that the Bampton Trustees could not, at the time of their election, have possessed any intimation of the intentions of a party, with whom they had had no previous communication whatever : and it is trusted, that the execution of the Lectures themselves, however deficient in other respects, will sufficiently manifest, that to engage in personal

and individual controversy, is of all things the most remote from the habits and intentions of the Author.



P. S. In some of the earlier Lectures, references will be found to articles in a proposed Appendix; but the bulk of the volume having exceeded expectation, it has been judged expedient, as the articles in question were in no respect of material consequence to the general argument, to abandon the intention proposed in that respect.



LECTURE I.

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1 COR. ii. 5.

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

INTRODUCTORY. On the opposition of the Anglican and Tridentine rules of faith: The Bible, according to our Church, the sole authoritative rule; but Ecclesiastical Tradition valued as an important subsidiary aid in interpretation. Answer to objections commonly made against the full sufficiency of the Bible as the rule of faith; especially those derived from its immethodical structure. Proposal to examine analytically the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, as the earliest and most important witnesses to Ecclesiastical Tradition.

LECTURE II.

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REV. ii. 13.

Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days in which my faithful martyr was slain among you.

Examination of the Apostolical Fathers, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp.

LECTURE III.

Page 119.

1 COR. ii. 6, 7.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world; but we speak the wisdom of God.

Examination of the earlier Philosophical Fathers, Justin, Tatian, and Athenagoras.

LECTURE IV.

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1 THESS. v. 21.

Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.

Examination of the Alexandrian Fathers, Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen, with a preliminary sketch of the Alexandrian Catechetical school.

LECTURE V.

Page 258.

1 COR. xi. 19.

There must also be heresies amongst you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.

Examination of Irenæus, with preliminary remarks on the Gnostic Heresies.

LECTURE VI.

Page 329.

REV. iv. 13, 14.

I know thy works, and that thou holdest fast my name : but I have a few things against thee.

Examination of Tertullian.

LECTURE VII.

Page 392.

1 TIM. iv. 12.

Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Examination of Cyprian, and concluding observations on the general introduction of Councils, with particular remarks on that held on the errors of Paul of Samosata and the Nicene Council.

LECTURE VIII.

Page 453.

EPH. iv. 11, 12.

And he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Concluding recapitulation on the character of the several classes of Christian Fathers, and the bearing of the testimony afforded by them on several leading points of doctrine and discipline.

EXTRACT
FROM
THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT
OF THE LATE
REV. JOHN BAMPTON,
CANON OF SALISBURY.

—— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates to
“ the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the Univer-
“ sity of Oxford for ever, to have and to hold all and
“ singular the said Lands or Estates upon trust, and to
“ the intents and purposes hereinafter mentioned :
“ that is to say, I will and appoint, that the Vice-Chan-
“ cellor of the University of Oxford, for the time being,
“ shall take and receive all the rents, issues, and pro-
“ fits thereof, and (after all taxes, reparations, and
“ necessary deductions made) that he pay all the re-
“ mainder to the endowment of eight Divinity Lecture
“ Sermons, to be established for ever in the said Uni-
“ versity, and to be performed in the manner following:
“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first Tuesday
“ in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen by the
“ Heads of Colleges only, and by no others, in the room
“ adjoining to the Printing-House, between the hours
“ of ten in the morning and two in the afternoon, to
“ preach eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year fol-

“ lowing, at St. Mary's in Oxford, between the com-
 “ mencement of the last month in Lent Term, and the
 “ end of the third week in Act Term.

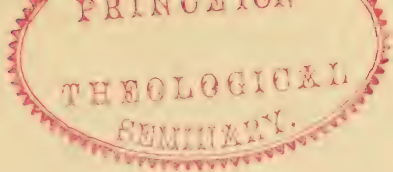
“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Divinity
 “ Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either of
 “ the following Subjects :—to confirm and establish the
 “ Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schis-
 “ matics—upon the divine authority of the holy Scrip-
 “ tures—upon the authority of the writings of the
 “ primitive Fathers, as to the faith and practice of the
 “ primitive Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord
 “ and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity of the
 “ Holy Ghost—upon the Articles of the Christian Faith,
 “ as comprehended in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight Divi-
 “ nity Lecture Sermons shall be always printed, within
 “ two months after they are preached, and one copy
 “ shall be given to the Chancellor of the University,
 “ and one copy to the Head of every College, and one
 “ copy to the Mayor of the City of Oxford, and one
 “ copy to be put into the Bodleian Library; and the
 “ expense of printing them shall be paid out of the
 “ revenue of the Land or Estates given for establishing
 “ the Divinity Lecture Sermons; and the Preacher
 “ shall not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue,
 “ before they are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall be
 “ qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons,
 “ unless he hath taken the degree of Master of Arts at
 “ least, in one of the two Universities of Oxford or
 “ Cambridge; and that the same person shall never
 “ preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons twice.”

AN
ANALYTICAL EXAMINATION,
&c.

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LECTURE I.

1 COR. ii. 5.

*That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but
in the power of God.*

THAT the voice which reveals to man his relations to his Creator, his duties in life, and his hopes in eternity, must be indeed a voice from heaven, is a truth as universally acknowledged, as if it did but amount to an identical proposition. Even those philosophers of the Gentiles, to whom the high privilege of instruction from a direct revelation was denied, have yet fully and frankly avowed their sense of its necessity; have desired to see the things which we see, and have not seen them; to hear the things which we hear, and have not heard them. He, especially, who may justly be said to have pursued to their utmost limits the natural anticipations of divine

truth implanted by the Creator in the human breast, even the greater disciple of Socrates himself, has most humbly and explicitly confessed his own deep conviction, that some divine word was necessary, which could alone afford a secure vehicle, to enable us to prosecute in safety our hazardous journey in the investigation of truth^a.

The whole Christian world is equally agreed, that this divine communication, so long looked for with such general and anxious expectation, was in due time fully and finally vouchsafed, when He, who was the desire of all nations, was made manifest; when God, who at sundry times and in divers manners had spoken to the fathers by the prophets, spake in the last days of his dispensation unto all by his Son.

In these things all Christians are agreed; but, unhappily, some difference of opinion has prevailed among the Churches, as to the means appointed in the counsels of Divine Providence, to guard and preserve,

^a Platonis Phædo, ed. Serr. t. i. p. 85.

through its descent to later ages, the completed faith established by this final revelation ; and to perpetuate it in that singleness and simplicity which must ever form its distinguishing characteristic.

On every view of the subject which it is possible for any Christian party to take, it is indeed perfectly evident, that all authority in matters ecclesiastical and theological, must ultimately resolve itself into an appeal to those divinely commissioned Apostles, whom Christ sent forth as his own ambassadors, armed with plenary powers, that they might erect his kingdom and Church on the earth ; and for this end endowed in all fulness with the promised gifts of the Spirit, to guide them into all truth, that in all things their authority might be infallible and indisputable. The only question therefore must be, through what channels the knowledge of these authoritative apostolical decisions has been transmitted to us.

All are indeed equally agreed, that we possess in the volume of the New Testament the authentic writings of these emis-

saries of the Lord ; and that these, being immediately dictated by the same Spirit who guided them throughout the great work committed to their charge, must therefore be fully invested with his own divine authority. Now, as the mind of the Spirit cannot be supposed to contradict itself, no one can for a moment imagine, that any thing *contrary* to this acknowledged scriptural standard can by any possibility be admitted as valid. No one of the Christian name can dispute, that the rule of the Scripture is, so far as it may extend, certain and absolute ; the only question which can arise must be, whether this scriptural rule be also sole as well as sure ; whether it be universal, as containing in itself all things essential to the faith, and therefore exclusive ; or whether it may not have left some points undetermined or obscure, and thus admit, and indeed require, addition and elucidation, from the traditional memory of the oral instructions originally delivered by the same inspired teachers.

This latter view the Church of Rome

strenuously maintains ; the Tridentine Council expressly asserts, that the truths essential to salvation are contained “ in libris Scriptis, et sine scripto traditionibus, quæ ipsius Christi ore et Apostolis acceptæ, aut et ipsis Apostolis, Spiritu sancto dic-tante, quasi per manus traditæ ad nos us-que pervenerunt^b. ”

Our own Church, on the other hand, dares not admit any other authoritative rule or standard, as to the essential doc-trines of a saving faith, than the Canonical Scriptures, the unquestioned and unques-tionable oracles of inspiration ; these she regards as in themselves all-sufficient and all-perfect, and therefore neither requiring nor admitting any extrinsic addition what-soever. If any single point may be selected, as forming the peculiar and distinctive character, which the founders of our re-formed Church most earnestly desired, I will not say, to *impress* on the structure they were *rearing*, but rather to *clear* out from the incrustations which had concealed it on the ancient walls of the *primitive*

^b Conc. Trid. Sess. 4.

temple they were *restoring*, it is undoubtedly this. This she has distinctly inscribed in the first page of her Articles; this she most solemnly impresses on the conscience of every Minister whom she fully commissions, when she directs her Bishops to admit none to the priestly office until they shall have first satisfactorily answered the emphatic question, “Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for salvation through Jesus Christ, and are you determined out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?” O, my brethren, let none of us who have once on this solemn occasion deliberately answered to such an appeal, that “we were so persuaded, and had so determined through God’s grace,” let none of us seem in any way to swerve from the obligation we have thus bound on our souls.

Yet assuredly we should greatly mistake

the intention of our Church, did we imagine that she called on us to neglect the information which the venerable relics of Christian antiquity have preserved to us, in recording the sentiments of the primitive ages of the faith. Our holy mother would never encourage us to depreciate the high and honourable claims of the first standard-bearers, and foremost champions of our religion. The true line taken by our Church appears to be this. She knows nothing of tradition as an independent rule of faith; but genuine and primitive tradition she anxiously seeks to discover, and when found she honours, not indeed as a rival mistress, but as the faithful handmaid of Scripture^c.

Many circumstances have of late concurred to reawaken upon these subjects the attention, too long it may be dormant, of our own divines. The true nature and

^c Waterland has excellently expressed this sentiment. "Antiquity ought to attend as an *handmaid* to Scripture, to wait upon her as her *mistress*, and to observe her; to keep off intruders from making too bold with her, and to discourage strangers from misrepresenting her." *Doctrine of the Trinity*, c. vii.

foundation of the Christian rule of faith, the just value and application of the remains of the early ecclesiastical writers, have again become the prominent topics of theological controversy.

In these discussions the advocates of one party have spoken as if the Church had received as a perpetual possession “ a tradition independent of the written word, parallel to Scripture, and not derived from it ; an unwritten word of God demanding the same reverence from us, and for exactly the same reasons, as that which is written^d.”

^d See the Sermon on Primitive Tradition by the Rev. J. Keble. The expressions indeed are there applied to Tradition as preserved in the days of Irenæus and Tertullian, but the whole argument, in order to apply with any force to our own times, must imply that such authoritative Tradition was not only a temporary but a perpetual possession in the Church. Indeed this must follow as a necessary corollary from the statement itself ; for if the authoritative Tradition were thus continued to the close of the second century, and certainly known to the fathers of that age, how can we doubt but that their writings, which are quite sufficiently voluminous, must have transmitted it to us. I must profess myself quite unable from these premises to deduce any conclusion which I can at all distinguish from the Tridentine rule. The amiable and excellent author, indeed, appears in his own mind to have fully succeeded in

While these writers have loudly arraigned what they call the presumptuous irreve-

reconciling such views, with the express reservation of the Scripture as the sole and paramount rule of faith; but others will probably find no little difficulty, if they admit two parallel and independent sources of faith, an unwritten as well as written word of God, claiming equal deference as the revelation of his will, to assign any reason for attributing to the one revelation any paramount authority over the other. And the natural tendency of such views, even in the very case of the writer referred to himself, is sufficiently obvious in a subsequent passage of his discourse. “As long as it is only doubtful whether any statement or precept is part of the Apostolic system or no, so long a mind imbued with true devotion will treat that statement or precept with reverence, and will not rudely reject or scorn it, lest he refuse to entertain an angel unawares. So long *the mere fact of its not being contained in Scripture cannot be felt as a justification for casting it aside, any more than its not being revealed in any particular book of Scripture which we might happen to value above the rest.* Although not in Scripture, it may yet be a part of their rule, concerning whom the Son of God hath declared, “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me.” p. 32. Is the idea, that there may be such omissions in the Scripture of important parts of the rule given by Christ to be proclaimed by his Apostles, at all consistent with the reception of those Scriptures as the sole and sufficient standard of faith? Can the parity here stated between the absence of a doctrine from one book of Scripture which may be contained in another, and the total absence from Scripture

rence of disparaging the Fathers, under the plea of magnifying the Scripture, may not the language they have themselves sometimes incautiously employed, seem liable to the converse charge of disparaging the Scriptures under the plea of magnifying the Fathers?

In the oscillations of human opinion, the natural and necessary consequence of any violent impulse towards one side of the just equilibrium, is ever to create a reaction of equal violence in the opposite direction. When such sentiments therefore have been avowed on the one side, we cannot be surprised that other parties should have been hurried into a contrary extreme, and expressed themselves as if inclined utterly to reject and despise the voice of Christian antiquity; and to treat with ridicule and contempt the names on so many accounts entitled to our regard and respect, the venerable fathers of Christian faith, the noble martyrs to Christian truth.

of that which nevertheless may be equally authorized by Tradition, be so explained as not to place Tradition and Scripture itself on exactly the same level of authority?

Is there then no *via media*? May we not even in these days, as the consistent sons of our beloved Church, maintain with her the full sufficiency and exclusive authority of the holy Scripture, as the sole rule of faith; and yet, with her, avail ourselves of every valuable aid, to be derived from the venerable relics of primitive Christianity?

These were the subjects which the circumstances of the times necessarily pressed on my own mind, when I received from the Electors the sudden and unexpected call which has placed me in this office: and in complying with which, I have hoped that I might perform a service not altogether unacceptable in the present state of our Church, by throwing together in such a form, as might render them available for the assistance of other and younger students, the collections I was employed in making to guide my own mind in forming a candid judgment. These will be principally directed to an examination of the general character, the true value, and the just application, of the early Patristical remains; for that appeared to me to con-

stitute the great cardinal point, on which the whole discussion must eventually turn.

To these objects, then, I propose to dedicate the series of Lectures on which I am now entering.

But first, in my present introductory discourse, I shall desire to commence with that which seems to lie at the foundation of the whole argument, the providential design evinced in the promulgation of the written documents of the New Testament as the sure and permanent depository of the faith : and this will naturally lead me to the examination of such circumstances connected with the nature and structure of these Scriptural records, as may appear to affect their competency to afford of themselves a rule of faith full, clear, and self-sufficient, and their relation to the subsidiary means of interpretation.

In the following Lectures I shall proceed to such an analytical and critical examination of the remains of the principal Fathers of the Ante-Nicene period, as I have found most useful in imparting a more clear and definite character to my own views on the

subject; and I would therefore hope may not be found altogether useless to others.

In the first place, in advocating the exclusive authority of Scripture as a rule of faith, very few observations will be necessary with regard to the earlier division of the sacred Volume; for as this is entirely confined to an introductory dispensation, it can have only a very partial bearing on the general question; and here assuredly no rival body of tradition is recognized^e. The full interpretation, indeed, of much of its prophetical portion, and the clear eluci-

^e It may, however, be perhaps said, that while all Christians reject the absurd figments of Cabbalistic tradition, it is still desirable to ascertain as far as we can what portions of the prophetical writings were originally considered by the Jewish Church itself as applicable to the Messiah. Such an investigation may undoubtedly be often found very useful, as affording argumenta ad homines in controversy with the Jews themselves in confutation of their later misinterpretation; but beyond this it can hardly lead to any conclusions challenging a very firm confidence. The inspired authority of the New Testament appears the only very certain guide as to the latent application of those earlier prophecies to the Christian scheme, either by directly pointing out such an application, or indirectly by the general analogy inferred from that which it does thus positively establish.

dation of the spiritual realities shadowed forth by its typical rites, do assuredly altogether depend on the *revelations of the final dispensation*; but few, I apprehend, will be inclined to look for such an interpretation elsewhere than in the inspired Scriptures of that dispensation themselves, for none but the Spirit can be his own interpreter in developing hidden meanings which can be known to his mind alone; few, I repeat, will ascribe any similar authority to the extravagances of allegorical interpretation introduced by the Alexandrian Jews; however seductive such a scheme may have unhappily proved to the minds of some of the Christian Fathers, too easily betrayed into adopting and extending it, and colouring it in accordance to their own views.

The real stress of the argument between written and unwritten tradition, as the channels of handing authoritatively down the doctrines of the Christian faith, manifestly depends on the circumstances under which those doctrines were first communicated to the infant Churches; and finally

embodied in writing by those divinely-commissioned promulgators, the inspired Apostles.

The advocates of unwritten tradition are constantly reminding us of the fact, (which indeed none have ever questioned,) that the primary instructions by which these Apostles built up the first Churches in the faith, were originally conveyed by oral and catechetical instruction; and that probably nearly thirty years had elapsed, after the foundations of an extended Church were laid by the Pentecostal descent of the Spirit, before the earliest Scriptures of the New Testament were published; and more than double that period before its canon was fully completed. While the living voice of the Apostles could be heard and known, there can be no doubt but that that voice would have formed a fully sufficient standard of faith; but this is quite a different thing from admitting, that when its living testimony was once withdrawn, tradition of any kind could be relied upon as a secure and sufficient depository for its preservation. We contend, that the uniform voice

of experience and history altogether negatives such a reliance, and declares that the edifice resting on such a treacherous and scanty foundation, contains the principle of its own destruction^f. We contend that the conduct of these first teachers in committing their instruction (before they were themselves withdrawn) to written documents, always implies their anxiety in this manner to preserve the *certainty* of the faith; and shews that they were unwilling to entrust it to any other channel. Thus being dead do they yet speak with a voice that cannot be mistaken; thus have they bequeathed to the Church the charter of its faith as a κτήμα ἐς αἰὲν, in records imperishable and immutable. We contend that the well-known rule of legal evidence, which refuses to admit for a moment any hearsay report on subjects where original documents can be produced in the court, is founded on the justest views of human testimony, and is strictly applicable to the present case.

^f See article A in the Appendix, on the experience of history as affecting the principle of Tradition.

With regard to that which may be said to constitute the prime material of the Christian faith, the history of the whole earthly ministry of its Divine Founder, the care with which every essential circumstance has been recorded in the written Gospels is obvious. We need not indeed assert, that every single word which he ever spake has been so preserved^g; but we do assert with St. John, that all those things which were necessary so to establish our faith in Jesus Christ, that believing we might have life through his name, have been written. We do assert, that tradition has not preserved a single credible addition to the testimony of the inspired penmen with regard to the discourses of power by which he prepared the minds of men for his faith, or the mighty works by which he confirmed it. Yet it is not that tradition has been altogether silent; on the contrary, it has spoken abundantly sufficient to confirm the extremest jealousy

^g One single precept, indeed, "it is more blessed to give than to receive," we know on the authority of St. Paul to have been delivered, though the Evangelists have omitted to record it.

in refusing to listen to its voice, as possessing any concurrent authority with Scripture. It is to tradition we owe the absurd legends of the forged gospels; and even when the judicious Irenæus, in contradiction to his usual practice, in two instances^h allowed himself to lend too easy an ear to its fallacious suggestions, the well-known errors into which he was in both cases betrayed may amply serve for an instructive warningⁱ. And we must especially regret that this should have happened to a Father, who had himself so explicitly and forcibly stated, that the Apostles had been directed by the will of God to deliver down to us in the Scriptures the things which before they had orally taught, in order thus to provide a sure foundation and column to our

^h See these cases considered in the Lecture on Irenæus.

ⁱ These will be particularly noticed in Lecture VI. on that Father. The absurd and disgusting legends concerning the preternatural and monstrous swelling of the body of Judas, &c. attributed by Theophylact to Papias early in the second century, might also be cited. Routh (*Rel. Sac. t. i. p. 24.*) argues, that some of the most gross circumstances were subsequent additions.

faith.^j” In forsaking for a moment that foundation, he has sufficiently shewn, that it is the only one on which it is safe to depend.

The account which one of the Evangelists has himself given us of his motives in composing his written Gospel, and which may well serve for all, sufficiently attests his conviction of the necessity even at this early period of embodying the substance of the previous catechetical instruction in a *written* record, as the only effectual means by which they could be transmitted and preserved with the certainty of truth; *ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν.*

In every other case the very same anxiety dictated the original composition of the Gospels. Thus when St. Matthew^k was about to withdraw from his ministry among the Hebrews, he left with them his Gospel, (originally published in their own language,) in order to supply by a written document the loss of his own personal

^j Iren. adv. Hær. l. iii. c. 1.

^k See Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. ii.

instructions; a labour surely *superfluous*, if he could have trusted to tradition.

Thus also St. Mark (generally called by ecclesiastical antiquity the interpreter of St. Peter) is said to have composed his Gospel at Rome, in consequence of the earnest request of those who had there heard the preaching of his apostolic companion, that he would leave with them a *memorial in writing* of the truths which had been so delivered.

And last of all, the aged survivor of the whole apostolical band, St. John, lest any thing essential should remain uncertified to future ages by a sure record, composed his own Gospel with the obvious design of completing the evangelical series, by a document strictly supplemental to all those which preceded it.

We may surely then conclude, that it was the *providential design* of God through the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, to secure in these written Gospels a *complete* and *exclusive* digest of *all* that was essential to be known concerning the ministry and teach-

ing of his ever-blessed Son. Thus far indeed I apprehend our positions will hardly be disputed by any. And strict parity of reasoning will I think enable us to extend similar inferences to the remaining and more doctrinal portions of the Christian Scriptures.

For with regard to the personal discourses of our Lord thus carefully preserved, although every consistent Christian must admit that they contain the full and pregnant germ of all the articles of our faith; yet was that faith undoubtedly far more explicitly developed, when the same Lord, having led captivity captive and gone up on high, poured down from his heavenly throne the gifts of his Holy Spirit; when that promised Paraclete fulfilled his fore-shewn office, by guiding the disciples into all truth, concerning the great dispensation which could only at that time be said to have received its final completion.

If then we should regard it as already proved, that it seemed good in the divine counsels to provide a permanent written record to secure the ἀσφάλεια of our Lord's

introductory communications while on earth, can we at all conceive it probable, that the *final* revelations of the same Lord from Heaven should have been left to repose on those very traditional foundations, which in the former case were confessedly rejected as altogether inadequate to afford the requisite security?

But to turn from presumptive argument to positive fact. We know that we have preserved to us the genuine Epistles of many of the Apostles to whom these heavenly revelations were vouchsafed, and we know that these Epistles are abundantly rich in doctrine. We have only then to enquire, do these undoubted apostolical writings constitute the *sole* authoritative standard of the truths they were commissioned to teach, which has been bequeathed permanently to the Church; or are they such as to require some other concurrent and supplemental rule of faith?

These Epistles in themselves undoubtedly claim as high an authority as any other part of the Scriptural volume. St. Paul appears fully to imply this equality, when

he concludes that which the best critics have considered as the earliest of those published by him, the first to the Thessalonians, with the following charge, so remarkable from the very impressive solemnity with which it is conveyed: “I adjure you by the Lord, (*ὀρκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν Κύριον,*) that this Epistle be read unto the holy brethren.” We know that from the beginning the prophetical Scriptures were read in the public assemblies of Christians, and it has therefore been well observed on this passage, that St. Paul here demands the same respect to be paid to this Epistle, as to the writings of the ancient prophets.

The design of the Apostles, to leave in these compositions a sure and permanent record of their doctrines, is fully expressed in a very affecting passage in the introduction of the second Epistle of St. Peter; “Knowing that I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me, I will endeavour [that is, by writing this Epistle] that ye may be able after my decease to have these things in remembrance, though ye now know them,

and be established in the present truth¹." And again, " This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour^m." Here undoubtedly this rock of the Christian Church distinctly implies, that he considered such *written memorials* as the true security for the preservation of genuine apostolical traditions; and that to such means alone he trusted to keep alive in the memory of his disciples, when his own voice was silenced in death, the truths that voice had once taught. And well had it been if the Church, which especially professes to be built on him as her foundation, had more faithfully received the spirit of these his words.

Many of these Epistles, it is true, were originally suggested by the local and temporary circumstances of the particular Churches to which they were addressed. Neither do they profess to form regular

¹ 2 Peter i. 14, 15, compared with 11. ^m 2 Peter iii. 1, 2.

catechetical treatises, embodying all the doctrines of Christianity, in a methodical and digested system, such as might perhaps be considered most appropriate to the purposes of elementary instruction, but they rather allude to these doctrines as truths already well known by those to whom they were addressed, than propose them in the form of matters to be learnt for the first time. These circumstances of the occasion and structure of the apostolical Epistles have sometimes been urged as if they justified the conclusion, that such documents must of themselves be inadequate to constitute a full, perfect, and sufficient standard of Christian doctrine. But I hope when we proceed more fully to examine the case, we shall find the juster inference to be, that while they do indeed require the more careful comparative study of the several parts of our Bibles, and the more diligent use of every *subsidiary* means of interpretation, yet the Bible itself is left after all as the one *original source* and the *sole authoritative* test of the whole and every part of Christian truth.

We may farther observe, that these very circumstances, sometimes almost imputed in the form of objections, have given double efficacy to the practical application of the doctrines contained, and supplied some of the strongest arguments on which our confidence in the genuineness of Scripture reposes. For all must feel how much more forcibly the great Christian doctrines are brought home in converting efficacy to the heart, by being incidentally presented in their combined and applied state as connected with the particular duties to which they afford the strongest motives, than had they been recorded in the abstracted form of a methodical digestⁿ; a form more logical perhaps, but undoubtedly more dry, more crude, more naked. And again, the struc-

ⁿ Thus in Phil. ii. 5. the inherent divinity of which Christ emptied himself when he condescended to assume the servile form of man, is brought forward as the great argument for the production of the like mind of humility and self-denial in his disciples. And in 1 Peter ii. 21. the Atonement of him 'who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree' is introduced to remind us of the great practical application of this doctrine, 'that he thus suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.'

ture of much of our Bible, as directly implicated with local circumstances and temporary occasions, could alone furnish those most convincing proofs arising from undesigned coincidences, which the sagacity of a Paley has so acutely investigated and so irrefutably enforced.

All the objections which have been founded on such grounds, as implying any incompetency in Scripture to form the sole rule of faith, appear to me to err in this; they regard the separate books of Scripture only in their individual and isolated character, and overlook them in their combined and collective capacity as united in a single whole; the true and just point of view in which they ought ever to be considered.

We must remember, that these inspired authors wrote not of themselves, but as they were moved by the Spirit of God. In order therefore to estimate aright the providential design of the Christian Scriptures, we must consider them not merely with reference to the particular intention of the individual writers in each separate

composition, but we must view them in the full integrity of their first completion, as they must have appeared in the counsels of Him, to whom “known are all his works from their beginning^o.”

I am fully persuaded that such a comprehensive and combined survey of the Christian Scriptures will amply convince us that they do thus contain in themselves a summary of the whole body of Christian doctrine, such as neither to require nor to admit any extraneous addition whatsoever.

For I would at once specifically enquire, what one article of essential doctrine is there which the Catholic Church has ever received from the beginning, which she has not always been able distinctly to demonstrate from this sacred Volume alone? If we are told of references to ecclesiastical tradition by Irenæus and Tertullian; we would reply, that the short and simple doctrinal formularies which they themselves propose as embracing the whole sum and substance of that tradition, must at once negative the supposition, that it contained

^o Acts xv. 18.

a single point not written in characters of light, neither to be overlooked nor mistaken in the Scriptures themselves. They are, in fact, nothing more than early copies of that primitive Creed, commonly, from its high antiquity, ascribed to the Apostles ; every syllable of which would be received by biblical Christians of every denomination, with the single and comparatively unimportant exception of the Socinians, whom we can hardly be required to include in such a description.

Or if from these brief and early formularies we turn to the more copious and complete digest of all the articles of the Christian faith, which constitutes the confession of our own Church ; we have already remarked, that she lays the foundation of these by enforcing the Scripture alone as the all-sufficient and exclusive source and rule of faith ; and if we try by this test all the other doctrines she embraces, we shall find her uniform and consistent throughout. The institutions of this cherished seat of our education, present

the most pregnant proof of this. A competent instruction in these articles of our religion, here very properly forms an essential part of the discipline by which our University would train the minds of the youth committed to her charge. To what sources then, I would ask, does she teach her sons to look for the proofs they are required to produce of the truth of the doctrines they thus profess? Does she not always exact full scriptural authority for every point? Would she ever be contented by answers resting only on ecclesiastical tradition? And has it ever yet been found that the Scriptures were insufficient to answer the call thus made on them? and that in order to produce more full and satisfactory evidence of the truths advanced, the respondent was ever reduced to the necessity of an appeal to tradition?

Our argument then, whether drawn from the obvious design evinced in the provision of a permanent scriptural record, or from the practical result, will converge to the same conclusion ; namely, that those documents

were intended in themselves to form, and have formed, the full, perfect, and sufficient source and rule of Christian faith.

But while we most strenuously maintain this as the only secure foundation; we fully allow at the same time that it has pleased the Almighty giver of inspiration so to appoint the structure of his revealed word, that it necessarily requires the most diligent and careful study rightly to extract and combine the great doctrines, which when so studied it will be found distinctly and abundantly to contain. The Bible is the rich, the only *mine*, of sacred truth; but they who would produce in an available form the precious ore, must not shrink from labour, nor despise instrumental means; all the subsidiary aids which can conduce to a just interpretation of the scriptural record, must be eagerly sought and fully applied. Hermeneutics must ever constitute an essential branch of Theology. The faithful comparison of Scripture with Scripture, the combined and collective study of its various parts by which the general harmony and analogy of the faith

is established, will undoubtedly form the primary and pervading principle of sound Hermeneutics. The Bible is ever its own first and best interpreter; and this will furnish the sole test by which we should try and examine every other professed guide. But in due subordination to this, we should gratefully avail ourselves of every useful external aid which may present itself to assist our interpretation; and among these external and subsidiary aids, we most cheerfully concede the very first place to those interesting remains of Christian antiquity, which may best guide us in ascertaining the genuine and general sentiments of the primitive Church.

If difficulties should occur to the mind, when it finds all this laborious process of the analytical investigation of the Scriptures necessary, to establish us fully in the right understanding of the great truths they reveal; if we should rather have expected to have found those truths ready drawn up for us in a brief and clearly digested system of doctrine, requiring neither study nor assistance to exhibit them in that form;

it may be sufficient perhaps to remark, that the means which God has been pleased to supply for the acquisition of religious knowledge, are thus placed in the strictest analogy with those which are afforded as the basis of every other branch of knowledge ; with this only difference, that as the science which alone maketh wise unto salvation is the only one of general necessity, in this case all the steps of the process of investigation are level to every capacity to which they are properly explained, and sufficient means for their being so explained have been provided from the beginning, by the institution of the Christian ministry. Nor does this intervention of our ministerial office as Christian instructors, in the least detract from the sole sufficiency of the Bible as the rule of faith. We must ourselves be taught by it, before we can teach others ; it is our sole rule, and we do but unfold it as such to those committed to our charge. We do not claim authority as the lords over their faith ; but we proffer assistance as its helpers. We require them to receive our doctrine,

not because we deliver it ; but we endeavour to teach them, how to consult their Bibles for themselves. We invite them to try our representations by their agreement with what they shall find to be there written, when their minds are so far instructed as to enable them to conduct such an enquiry advantageously. In this, our ultimate reference must of necessity be to private judgment, but we sedulously endeavour that it shall not be to unqualified and uninstructed judgment. We would first train and cultivate the faculty, and place faithfully before it all the materials on which it is called to exercise its decision ; and then we trust we may frankly and fearlessly appeal to that decision. Such an appeal in fact must ever form the last resort ; for even he who yields the blindest submission to authority, does so simply because he is convinced by arguments satisfactory to his own private judgment, that there is some authority to which it is his duty so to submit. It is indeed only an identical proposition, that whatever any man sincerely believes, he must believe entirely

on his own individual conviction. But for the safe exercise of this private judgment, most necessary is it that the public mind should be trained and disciplined, prepared and ripened ; and therefore from the beginning the Christian ministry has been appointed, to attend on this very thing. God's word as the great subject-matter of instruction, and his ministers as its instruments, were concurrently given. It never has been the will of Providence that this divine word should go forth altogether unaccompanied, to effect its work of conversion. Nothing has ever actually occurred in the history of the Church at all resembling the romantic fiction of Bacon, respecting the introduction of Christianity into his Utopian Atlantic Island ; when a column of flame, surmounted by a cross of light, attracted attention to a cedar ark floating on the waves, and containing a single copy of the Bible ; and this heaven-sent volume was alone, and without any external assistance whatever, the effectual instrument of converting and fully establishing these wise but simple-minded islanders in

the faith. Not such, however, has ever been the case with any actual Church; but every successive age of Christianity has found a regular system of Christian doctrines delivered down to it by its predecessors; and has been called only to examine and certify these by careful comparison with the inspired oracles, from which they profess to have been derived.

But how is this comparison to be conducted? how are the instructors, appointed to assist the people, to be themselves instructed? I have before suggested the *analogy* of the means provided, and the processes required for gaining religious and other knowledge. The profound remark of Origen, which suggested the most philosophical of all theological treatises; the great work of Bp. Butler, as its complete development; may be here most justly applied; for he who believes the Bible and nature to be the works of the same Author, must necessarily look for analogous phenomena in both. Now in the book of revelation, considered as the source of religious knowledge, we find its structure such, as rather to com-

prise the several elements of that knowledge disseminated throughout its several parts, than to present them regularly embodied in a systematic whole. And to this the book of nature, considered as the source of physical science, exhibits throughout the strictest analogy. It does but present us with scattered and isolated phenomena, and these require to be developed by a laborious process of analytical investigation, and to be combined and generalized in their results, before we can succeed in eliciting in any systematic form the great truths they are calculated to yield. Those who have exalted ecclesiastical tradition at the expense of the Bible, have indeed tauntingly urged this very analogy upon us. The Bible Christian has been scoffingly placed on a par with the sky astronomer^a; as if in either case the rational desire to pursue the investigation of the phenomena with our own eyes, involved the neglect of the means calculated to assist the enquiry. The parallel (thus as it should seem *objected* to us) we most cheerfully

^a See Froude's Remains, p. 412, 413.

accept. We are quite willing to own, that we do in the one instance assert the phenomena of the sky, and these alone, to be the rule of astronomical faith, exactly in the same sense that we maintain (in the other) the Bible, and the Bible alone, to be the rule of Christian faith; the analogy is just and close throughout. The volume of the heavens presents phenomena hard of interpretation, and seemingly inconsistent; we shall there assuredly find *δυσερμήνευτα* and *ἐναντιοφάνη* quite as numerous and difficult, and indeed far more so, than any critic can point out in the volume of His word who made those heavens. What path then is the intellectual enquirer called to pursue? is he to abandon, as likely only to lead to error, the examination of those phenomena, and seek conveniently to fix his faith on some supposed infallible authority, some illustrious name of old? Is he to adopt an axiom of Aristotle as the incontrovertible solution of every difficulty? Such we know was long the course pursued in the middle ages, by those who may be considered as the

genuine philosophical representatives of the school of tradition ; but not such were the processes by which Kepler securely laid the foundations of true science, in the discovery of the laws which have immortalized his name ; or Newton, combining and generalizing those laws, elicited from them the great mechanical principle of the universe. Such minds knew, that the apparent difficulties of the phenomena required only, for their full and satisfactory solution, a more careful and minute study of them, and that careful comparison which might educe their general analogy. And in the very same spirit that they read the book of nature, should the Christian student read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, his own peculiar book, the book of God.

I am of course aware that it may be said, that these illustrations are borrowed rather from the original process of discovery, than applicable to the most suitable method of subsequently communicating the truth when once ascertained. I may be told, that while the inventive method is necessarily analytical, the traditive method is more

properly synthetical, and proceeds most effectually by the development of truth from its systematic and integral form into all its particular applications; and I may be reminded, that religion is a subject which does not require the inventive process, and can only properly admit that of inculcation.

But I would still observe, that to retrace the process of analytical investigation, is necessary not only for the original investigation of truth, but to convince our minds that such truth has been correctly ascertained. When St. Paul proposed to the Berœans Christ as the fulfilment of the law, they were not checked but highly commended for searching the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. Our religion, it is true, is first presented to our minds as a system delivered down through successive ages of the Church, and challenging on fair grounds of presumption to be received as Scriptural truth; but surely to confirm our faith we are bound to compare that system with the source from which it professes to be derived. And in this also the parallel, which I have before proposed,

will still hold, with the case of astronomy, and every other mature science. For the astronomical student of the present day is certainly not at all in the same situation with the earliest shepherd on the plains of Chaldæa or navigator of Tyre; ‘*Primus qui stellis numeros et nomina fecit.*’ The student has now a probable system proposed to his acceptance; and it is most likely that this system may have been originally presented to his mind in the synthetical method; and so presented, may have to a great degree won the assent of his reason, by its obviously bearing those characters of harmony and simplicity, which belong to our natural anticipations of truth, our *πρόληψις τῆς ἀληθείας*. But still I may appeal to every academical hearer, whether any aspirant to scientific knowledge is ever considered fully to have mastered the subject, until he has learnt to trace step by step the analytical process on which it is founded. It is indeed manifestly impossible to obtain any firm footing in science without this; for if the mere synthetical student were challenged to

produce his evidence for the first principles he assumed, it is obvious that every satisfactory answer must ultimately resolve itself into the analysis by which they were originally established ; and if we refer to a period when rival and plausible hypotheses might offer conflicting claims to be received, by what other process than this can a just determination be possibly awarded ? In the very same age, when the public mind was distracted in religion by the opposite pretensions of Romanism and Protestantism to be regarded as the pure and primitive faith, it was equally disturbed in science by the very analogous struggle between the systems of Ptolemy and Copernicus ; the former resting on long-established authority, and capable of explaining to a great extent the known phenomena ; the latter asserting its superior simplicity, demanding a more extended analysis, and courting investigation as its sure field of triumph. And what but an appeal to the fullest analysis of the celestial phenomena could possibly have led to the establishment of astronomical truth ? What but a similar

analysis of the declarations of the Scripture can promise justly to determine the theological debate?

Will it be objected, that the few and instructed alone can be considered competent to conduct such a process? We have all along supposed that the assistance of qualified instructors is at hand, to unfold to their people the nature of this Scriptural appeal; and we maintain, that when once so unfolded, the people are fully competent to follow out such an appeal, and to judge of its justice; as I have already observed. The author of the Acts assumes the Bereans to have been so; and in what can we suppose them to have been superior to the inhabitants of any English provincial town? If indeed the simple peasant be pronounced quite incompetent for the just examination of such evidence, I am anxious to be informed, in what manner it is supposed that he can possibly arrive at truth in many situations. In Ireland, for instance, the peasant is beset on both sides by conflicting claims of ecclesiastical authority. Now if the Scriptural appeal be rejected as above

his powers, what more simple and easy test can be substituted? I would ask then, is such an one, however sincerely and candidly he may desire to ascertain the truth, left destitute of the means? Is his choice between the two forms of Christianity a matter of absolute indifference?

And here for the present I would willingly pause. It has been my endeavour throughout this introductory Lecture to exhibit the arguments most convincing to my own mind as to the supremacy of the Bible as the great standard to which the ultimate appeal must always lie; but I have been equally anxious to maintain, in due subordination to this, the importance of an educated ministry, as the faithful guides to the people to qualify them for making this appeal with advantage; and I would strongly urge on that ministry the necessity of preparing themselves for their high office by every appropriate preliminary study. Let the Bible itself be their first, their great, their constant object of attention; but let them not neglect in their proper place and relation any useful subsi-

diary means of interpretation; and least of all, let them throw aside the judicious study of Christian antiquity.

With these views, having thus laid the foundation in the paramount authority of the holy Scriptures, I shall endeavour in the following Lectures, faithfully, I trust, however imperfectly, to offer such assistance as I may to the younger student, who may be desirous of undertaking for himself the candid examination of the most interesting Christian remains of the first three centuries. These I would class under three leading divisions, as suggested by the joint consideration of their age and schools.

1. The Apostolical Fathers, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp.

2. The Philosophical and Alexandrian Fathers, Justin, Athenagoras, Clemens, Alexandrinus, and Origen.

3. The more dogmatic Fathers of the Western Church, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Cyprian.

I propose to conclude the brief and summary survey, which alone my span will allow, with the period when the establish-

ment of Christianity as the religion of the empire allowed the Church to utter her sentiments with her united voice in General Councils, and it therefore remains no longer necessary to educe those sentiments from the collation of her individual writers.

I shall indeed be prevented, by the limits I have thus prescribed to myself, from entering into the rich field presented by the able and eloquent writers who so richly adorned the fourth century. But when the only alternative must have been to treat the subject altogether in a superficial manner, or to confine my view to its earlier portion, I feel that I have made the most judicious choice in my power.

I am happy, however, to conclude the present Lecture by a few quotations from two of the most distinguished luminaries of that century, which bear entirely on the great subject which has now engaged our attention ; and shew that no biblical advocate of the present day can possibly be more deeply impressed with a sense of the supreme importance of the Bible than were these ancient Fathers of the Church.

“The Scriptures,” saith the eloquent Chrysostom, “are an epistle from God himself, and to read them is to converse with him ^b.”

“The Apostolical writings,” he adds, “are the very walls of the Church^c. Some one perhaps may ask, What then shall I do, I who cannot have a Paul to refer to? Why, if thou wilt thou mayest still have him more entire than many, even with whom he was personally present; for it was not the sight of Paul that made them what they were, but his words. If thou wilt, thou mayest have Paul and Peter and John, yea, and the whole choir of Prophets and Apostles, to converse with thee frequently. Only take the works of these blessed men, and read their writings assiduously. But why do I say to thee, Thou mayest have Paul; if thou wilt thou mayest have Paul’s Master; for it is he himself that speaketh to thee in Paul’s words^d.”

^b T. iii. p. 73. and Hom. ii. in cap. 1. Gen.

^c Hom. in 2 Tim. iii. 1.

^d In Coloss. Hom. ix.

“ Look not for any other teacher ; you have the oracles of God ; no one can teach like them ; any other instructor may from some erroneous principle conceal from you many things of the greatest importance ; and therefore I exhort you to procure for yourselves *Bibles*. Have them for your constant instructors ; and in all your trials have recourse to them for the remedies you need.”

Chrysostom, therefore, most anxiously recommends the constant study of these best guides as of universal necessity to persons of every class in society. “ I always advise, and shall never cease to advise and call upon you all, not only to attend to what is said here in the church, but also to be diligent in reading the divine Scriptures at home. Nor let any one allege the usual frivolous excuses, ‘ I am engaged in public affairs, or I have a trade, and a wife, and children, to take care of ; in a word, I am a secular person, it is not my business to read.’ So far are these things from making out a valid or even tolerable excuse, that upon these accounts and for these very

reasons, you have the more need to read the Scriptures^e.”

Another contemporary of Chrysostom, Basil of Cæsarea, commonly surnamed the Great, has many passages equally strong to the same effect ; I need but cite three short aphorisms.

“ It behoveth,” saith he, “ that every word and every work should be accredited by the testimony of the inspired Scripture^a.”

“ Let the inspired Scriptures ever be our umpire, and on whichever side the doctrines are found accordant to the divine word, to that side the award of truth may with entire certainty be given.”

* De Lazar. Hom. iii. t. i. p. 737.

^a These quotations from Basil appear to me so very important, that I think it best to give his own words in the original. “Οτι δεῖ πᾶν ῥῆμα, ἢ πρᾶγμα πιστοῦσθαι τῇ μαρτυρίᾳ τῆς θεοπνεύστου γραφῆς. Moral. Reg. 26. t. ii. p. 256. Οὐκοῦν ἡ θεόπνευστος ἡμῖν διαιτησάτω γραφή· καὶ παρ’ οἷς ἂν εὗρεθῇ τὰ δόγματα συνωδὰ τοῖς θείοις λόγοις, ἐπὶ τούτους ἤξει πάντως τῆς ἀληθείας ἡ ψῆφος. Ep. 189. t. iii. p. 277. “Οτι δεῖ τῶν ἀκροατῶν τοὺς πεπαιδευμένους τὰς γραφὰς δοκιμάζειν τὰ παρὰ τῶν διδασκάλων λεγόμενα· καὶ τὰ μὲν σύμφωνα ταῖς γραφαῖς, δέχεσθαι, τὰ δὲ ἀλλότρια ἀποβάλλειν. Moral. Reg. 72. cap. 1.

Lastly, “ It is the duty of hearers, when they have been instructed in the Scriptures, to try and examine by them the things spoken by their teachers, to receive whatever is consonant to those Scriptures, and to reject whatever is alien ; for thus they will comply with the injunction of St. Paul, to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.”

These last quotations form a complete summary of all that I have myself wished to inculcate on this important subject, and I feel that I cannot better conclude than by leaving the impression of so much higher an authority on your minds. May He, into accordance with whose will and word we would bring every thought and word of ours, graft his own truth inwardly in your hearts.

LECTURE II.



REV. ii. 13.

Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days in which my faithful martyr was slain among you.

I HAVE already, in my Introductory Lecture, proposed as the subject of the present course, the analytical examination of the remains of the earlier Christian Fathers; considering this as the only satisfactory mode of forming a correct estimate of the real import and value of the vestiges of primitive tradition which remain to us, and of the just application of such materials to the purposes of theological science.

In the Lecture of the present day, it is my intention to commence this design, by the consideration of the genuine remains of those called the Apostolical Fathers; the actual companions and immediate successors of the inspired founders of our faith. A description it is surely impos-

sible to repeat, without the associated feelings of the most reverential regard.

The first of these whom we shall be called to notice, Clement of Rome, must especially claim these sentiments of the deepest deference ; for St. Paul himself has borne the strongest testimony to his active merits and holy character, as his own fellow-labourer, whose name was written in the book of life^a. The cotemporary of the Apostles in date, and their unwearied coadjutor in evangelical labour, he was no less closely connected with them by identity of spirit. We have unhappily but one short Epistle which can with any confidence be regarded as a genuine work of this first and most venerable of the uninspired transmitters of our faith. Small as it is in compass, Eusebius has forcibly expressed the sense which the primitive Church entertained of the magnitude of its interest and importance, when he calls it *Μεγαλὴ καὶ θαυμασία* ; and if we turn from the earliest to one of the most modern ecclesiastical historians, we find

^a Phil. iv. 3.

the pious Milner ascribing to it “ a wonderful depth of holiness and wisdom.” In the primitive times, indeed, it appears to have been constantly read, not only in the Church to which it was addressed, but in many others also, as conducing to great and general edification.

This valuable and interesting document had, however, very nearly been lost to the Church, for it is extant in one only MS. being written at the end of the celebrated Alexandrian Codex of the New Testament, presented to our Charles I. by the then Patriarch of Constantinople ; and from thence first published, about two centuries ago, in our own University, by the care of our distinguished and general scholar Junius^b.

Some parties were, at first, inclined to question the genuineness of this single copy, brought to light at so late a period ; but it is now unhesitatingly and universally received. It agrees exactly with the fragments preserved in ancient quotations ; and no one who has the slightest skill and tact in appreciating internal evidence, and

^b Oxonii 1633.

distinguishing between the affectations of sophistical forgeries and the simplicity of truth, can for a moment doubt, that the Epistle as we now possess it is a genuine production; for it bears in every respect the most convincing marks of its early origin. The whole composition, indeed, of this Epistle so exactly tallies with the peculiar circumstances of the Church in that age, and with those of the author, and these coincidences are so obviously undesigned and natural, that similar arguments to those, by which the acuteness of Paley has placed the genuineness of the Pauline Epistles beyond the possible reach of scepticism, might be readily applied to this.

The argument of the Epistle, directed only to oppose the factious spirit of the Corinthians, has nothing in it which could in any way have been supposed to have recommended itself to any forger; for there is nothing striking in the occasion, such as might have captivated the fancy of a sophistical rhetorician; nor is there any thing which could have advanced the interest of any party, or exalted the pretensions of

any order in the Church. It is throughout only a plain and practical exhortation to Christian peace and unity, occasioned by the factious spirit which disturbed the Corinthian Church. And, secondly, with reference to the undesigned coincidences with the peculiar circumstances of the first age of the Church; it is quite evident, that it must have been written to a Church, of which a considerable and influential portion of the members had been Jews or proselytes to that faith, since it throughout supposes the most intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures of the Old Testament; for these, and not the Scriptures of the New, are universally quoted as the written authority for the doctrines it contains. The author, indeed, very properly refers to the discourses of our blessed Lord, as to an authority of equal, and indeed still more especial, weight; but he never expressly quotes these from any particular written Gospel; and although he always exactly agrees with these evangelical narratives in substance and in sense, yet the verbal discrepances will shew, that he does not transcribe from

them ; but, as Bp. Pearson has well observed, seems to have relied on a memory previously familiar with our Lord's words, from the oral communications of the Apostles or their disciples. Now this is exactly the manner in which we should have supposed such references to have been made in an Epistle, which was most probably written before the publication of the last Gospel, that of St. John, and when the very earliest could not have obtained a circulation of more than a very few years. But if we compare the form of these quotations with those in Justin Martyr, we shall see such a marked difference, as must at once induce us to refer these to a much earlier period.

With the Epistles of his revered associate in evangelical labours, St. Paul, the mind of Clement appears to have been very thoroughly imbued. Coincidences of thought and expression are perpetually occurring, which can admit no other explanation than that particular passages of this Apostle's compositions were directly present in his thoughts, while he was framing his own

sentences ; Eusebius has particularly remarked such coincidences with the Epistle to the Hebrews. Yet Clement only expressly quotes the particular Epistle of that Apostle to the same Corinthian Church to which he was himself writing^a; and as this circumstance would appear to indicate, that at that early period the Epistles addressed to any particular Churches were not generally read in the services of other congregations, it may serve to afford another mark of the probable date of the composition.

As we should thus conclude from the mere internal evidence of the Epistle itself that it must have been composed^b while a

^a With reference to these allusions by Clement to the New Testament, I would refer to Lardner's invaluable collections. (*Credibility*, vol. i. p. 293.) He quotes several passages parallel to the three first Gospels, and the fourth was certainly not yet published. The coincidences with the apostolic Epistles are far more numerous, exceeding forty: they are referable to every one of the Pauline Epistles, excepting that to Philemon, and to those of Peter, James, and Jude.

^b The exact date of the publication of this Epistle is not certainly known ; but as it alludes to sufferings recently endured by the Roman Church, it appears to have been written soon after the close of some persecu-

large and influential portion of the members of the Church had been originally members of the Synagogue, and while the Canon of the New Testament was only in the process of formation, so there are other indications which would lead us to regard the author as having been himself originally a Gentile, and having had his mind previously imbued with the associations of Classical History and Mythology; thus in enforcing the sacrifice of selfish interests to the general good of the Church, he urges that the Gentiles^c could bring forward many examples of patriotic sovereigns, who had devoted themselves to death to deliver their people; and of statesmen who had embraced a voluntary exile to relieve their cities from the course of sedition; to the same effect we may cite the reference to the Danaidæ and Dirce^d among the in-

tion. Certain critics have assigned that of Nero, A.D. 64; others that of Domitian 95: as the author speaks (c. 44.) of persons appointed to the ministry by other eminent men after the time of the Apostles, and calls Corinth an ancient Church, we must necessarily prefer the later date.

^c Chap. 55.

^d Chap. 6.

stances of unjust oppression, and though we may not entirely approve the taste which has blended such mythological fables with Scriptural examples, we are yet thus assisted in individualising the author. I think we may also trace to a similar source his employing the fabulous legends concerning the Phoenix^e as an illustration of the great doctrine of the resurrection. This instance of credulity in Clement has been often severely animadverted upon; but we must remember, that in justice he ought to have as partners in the same reproach, Tacitus the most philosophical of historians, and Pliny the professed naturalist^f.

^e Chap. 25. The later Fathers, who employed the same illustration, probably borrowed it from Clement.

^f Tacitus gravely relates, that this bird had been seen in Egypt; though he certainly adds, that he believed the accounts concerning it had been *fabulis auctar* (Annal. vi. 28.); and Pliny devotes a whole chapter to recite the marvellous history of this bird, including its self-conflagration and revivification as given by Manilius, whom he praises as self-taught, yet illustrious for the highest learning; and Pliny himself merely inserts a cautionary *haud scio an fabulose*, (Hist. Nat. x. 2.)

Of the personal history of the author, we gather very little additional information from history, excepting that he was one of the very early Bishops of Rome^ε. Some later writers have asserted, that he sealed his Christian testimony by martyrdom; but the silence of the earlier authorities, although constantly careful to specify those who were thus called to resist unto blood, appears to negative this supposition.

His Epistle is written in the name of the Roman Church over which he presided, to that of Corinth, but it assumes no tone of authority. It is written as from a sister to an equal sister, not as from a mistress to a dependent.

The style is well characterized by Photius, as simple and clear, and closely approximating to the natural and artless manner of expression of the Apostolical compositions.

^ε The exact order of his succession to that See has been disputed; but Irenæus the earliest, and Eusebius the most critically exact, authority, concur in assigning to him the third place after the foundation of that Church by the Apostles Paul and Peter.

It cannot be expected that a single Epistle, not longer than the former of those of St. Paul to the same Church, and of which the leading design is not to establish its members in the faith, but to compose their differences, should afford us any very important assistance in the determination of doctrinal questions. Valuable as it is, it assuredly can advance no manner of claim to assume the office even of an interpreter as to any points, conceived to be less explicitly laid down in the writings which the Apostles themselves have left us. It is in no respect more methodical or more definite than they are; and there is scarcely a single Epistle of St. Paul from which it would not be easy to compile a still clearer and more copious digest of Christian doctrine than we should be able to extract from this; yet both, as we shall see, would be found in the most harmonious accordance with each other. For example, as to the divine nature of Christ, Clement declares in the very words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “that he is the effulgence of God’s Majesty, and so much higher than the angels, as he has

obtained a more excellent name than they^h;" and in another place describes him "as the Sceptre of the Majesty of God."

In the following passages, Clement strongly refers to Christ as the great source of every spiritual grace; "through him we are enabled to raise our view to the heavenly height, and there behold his own pure and sublime countenance; through him the eyes of our hearts are opened, and our ignorant and darkened minds illumined with his admirable light; and thus are we made to taste of immortal knowledge. Christ is the high priest of our offerings, the supporter of our weaknessⁱ."

Nor does this Father less explicitly direct us to the sacrifice of the Atonement, as alone having procured this grace. "Let us look stedfastly at the blood of Christ, and see how precious in the sight of God is that blood which was shed for our salvation, and hath brought in the grace of repentance for the

^h See the 36th chapter for all these declarations of the divine power of Christ, excepting that which describes him as the Sceptre of God's Majesty, which occurs c. 16.

ⁱ Chap. 36.

whole world^k. Through his love towards us, Christ our Lord gave his blood for us^l. The whole fifty-third chapter^m of Isaiah, with all its distinct prophetic declarations of the great doctrine of the Atonement, is strongly insisted on in its application to Christ by this Father.

He particularly dwells on those Scriptures which most pointedly inculcate the universal and original corruption of our nature, and strongly quotes the humiliating confession of Job, though himself just and blameless, true, and one that served God and eschewed evil, that no one is free from pollution, no, not though he should live but for one day.

The doctrine of justification by faith is also one of those to which he has borne the fullest and clearest testimony. "The servants of oldⁿ," he tells us, "were glorified and magnified, not through themselves, or through any work of righteousness that

^k Chap. 7.

^l Chap. 49.

^m Chap. 16, 17. and in chap. 18, he cites the whole fifty-first Psalm, as strongly demonstrating the same humiliating truth.

ⁿ Chap. 32.

they had wrought, but through God's only will. And thus we also, being called by his will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves, neither through our own wisdom or intelligence or piety, or through the works we have done in any holiness of our own hearts, but through that faith by which the Almighty hath justified all from the beginning of time. It is written, Blessed are they whose iniquities are remitted, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin; and this blessedness is in the elect of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever^o."

Clement, however, carefully proceeds to enforce in the most animated strain the utter inconsistency of such views with the gross abuse of Antinomianism^p. "What then, brethren, shall we do? shall we pause from good works? shall we abandon works of love? Oh no, God will never permit us thus to act. Rather let us hasten with more intense eagerness of mind to the accomplishment of every good deed.

The Creator and Lord of all himself rejoiceth in his own works. Having such an example then before us, let us with all our power enter on the performance of his will, and obediently work the work of righteousness.”

A Christian temper, therefore, in all things, Clement copiously and emphatically enjoins, and more especially (as required by the contentions then agitating the Corinthian Church) a spirit of meekness, love, peace, and unity. This he enforces, in the first place, by precepts and examples drawn from the Old Testament, which, as we have observed; he most generally and directly quotes^a; but he very impressively winds up

^a With reference to these frequent quotations from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, we may observe, that in the applications made of them, we find scarcely any thing of that extravagant fondness for allegorical interpretation, which so unhappily infected so many of the subsequent Fathers, and which seems to have been principally derived from the Jewish Alexandrian schools. One instance does, however, occur, which may shew that Clement himself had not entirely escaped; namely, when he refers to the scarlet cord of Rahab as a type of the Saviour's blood. c. xii. Justin, Irenæus, and Origen, have the same application.

his exhortation, by entreating them “ more especially to remember the words of the Lord Jesus which he spoke,” and then introduces the greater part of those inimitable lessons of Christian love, conveyed in our Lord’s discourses, recorded Matt. vi. and Luke vii. but here repeated apparently from memory.

Besides these scriptural arguments, Clement very eloquently enforces the duty of harmonious order, in obedience to God, as the great governing principle in the universe. “ In submission to his law, the heavens revolve in peace, and day and night perform their appointed course without interference ; by his ordinance the sun and moon, and all the hosts of stars, roll on in harmony, without deviation from their allotted bounds ; in obedience to his will the pregnant earth yields her fruit plentifully in due season to man and beast, and to all creatures therein, not changing any thing which was decreed by him ; the ocean is restrained by the same commands, and its waves pass not their prescribed limits ; spring and summer, and autumn

and winter, give place peaceably to one another; the winds, in their station, perform their service without interruption, each in his appointed season; the perennial springs, ministering both to pleasure and to health, yield, as it were, their breasts to our use; nay, the smallest of living creatures maintain their intercourse in peace and concord. For God is good to all, but above measure to us, who flee to his mercy through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and majesty for ever and ever. Amen^t.”

While we admire the genuine scriptural spirit of such passages, it must yet be quite obvious, that we cannot be said to derive from them any accession of information as to Christian doctrine, beyond what we may, with equal readiness, derive at once from the inspired volume itself. We may, however, more naturally and justly turn to such a quarter, in the hope of obtaining farther light with regard to the form of discipline then established in the Christian Church; and on this point the testimony of a contemporary of the

^t Chap. 20.

Apostles might be considered as more especially important. The occasion of this Epistle necessarily leads Clement to many incidental allusions to this subject; for it appears, that the Corinthians had been led into such violence of faction, as to endeavour to eject certain persons from the ministerial office^s. In his argument to prove the gross impropriety of such conduct, Clement plainly deduces the authority of a regular Church government, from that which had been divinely instituted in the elder covenant^t. In the Christian Church

^s Chap. 44. Sometimes λειτουργία, sometimes ἐπισκοπή, is used to denote the offices of those against whom these factious efforts were directed. Are we to consider these as two distinct offices, or only different terms describing the same? It appears that in this, as in the Pauline Epistles, ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος are employed synonymously. The sedition clearly could not have been directed against the Episcopal office solely, because Clement speaks in the plural ἑνίους μετηγάγετε, and there could not have been more than one Bishop of the single city of Corinth; are we to suppose that there was a struggle to displace the Bishop, and a portion of the Clergy who adhered to him? Having no other source of information concerning this dissension, it must necessarily remain very obscure.

^t In chap. 40, Clement insists, that as God has prescribed stated times to specific liturgical services, so

he there traces the regular succession of its ministry from the Apostles. “ Christ, he tells us, was sent forth from God, and the Apostles from Christ, both in due order ; and these, having received their commission, went forth in full assurance of faith ; and when they had preached the Gospel through the countries and cities, they constituted the first fruits of their converts, (whom they judged approved in the Spirit,) as Bishops and Deacons ; and delivered an orderly appointment (*ἐπινομή*) for the future ; that when they should sleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministry, appointed by themselves, or after their time by other

hath he ordained by what particular persons he willeth them to be offered ; for specific ministerial offices were assigned to the High Priest ; and others respectively to the Priests and Levites ; but the Layman is confined to the duties of the Laity. In the 43d chapter, Clement especially refers to the designation of the house of Levi to the priesthood, by the miraculous blossoming of Aaron’s rod, recorded Numbers xvii. The conduct of Moses on this occasion, he says, was guided by his foreknowledge, and, in order effectually to prevent the divisions which otherwise must have arisen, the inference Clement intended to draw is obvious, viz. that a regularly appointed ministry is equally necessary to prevent divisions in the Christian Church.

men of high account (ἐλλόγιοι); the whole Church consenting to their appointment^u.” Now as two orders only are here mentioned, Bishops and Deacons, it has been often urged, that the former title must here be considered (as in some passages of the Pauline Epistles) to include the order of Presbyters; but the real question is, surely not one of name, but of office; and we shall soon see full proof, that each Church was, at that time, under the superintendence of an Episcopal President. Indeed the ἐλλόγιοι mentioned in the above extract, to whom the charge of selecting proper persons for the Ministry was consigned, clearly bore the functions peculiar to the especial office of Episcopacy. From the above passage we clearly learn, that the assistance and consent of the general congregation at such ordinations was the custom of the primitive Church; and from the Epistles of Cyprian we find, that the same custom continued to prevail in its full original vigour more than one hundred and fifty years later, “*Convocata tota plebe,*

^u Chap. 44.

ne quis ad altaris ministerium, vel ad sacerdotis locum, indignus obreperet.”

I do not now propose to enter into any examination of the other Epistles, the Recognitions, the Homilies, and Digest of what are called the Apostolical Constitutions, which have been ascribed to Clement; none of them have any sufficient support of internal or external evidence; and the spuriousness of most is palpable and gross. Eusebius, with his usual critical discernment, decidedly rejects them; and an enquiry like the present must obviously be confined to documents, generally admitted as genuine; for it is quite clear that no one would dream of ascribing a shadow of authority to any others.

The reason now stated, may also well excuse me from detaining you by any scrutiny concerning certain works which have been ascribed to other companions of the Apostles; namely, a general Epistle said to have been written by St. Paul's associate, Barnabas, and a mystical treatise called the Shepherd, attributed to Hermas*. It is

* It should however appear, that the Hermas to whom the Pastor was ascribed, though afterwards confounded

true that they were quoted as genuine by Clement of Alexandria; but as he has patronized other and extremely rank forgeries, his testimony can only prove that they must have been published before the close of the second century. And the more careful enquiry and superior critical intelligence of Eusebius, (every way the most reliable early authority on such subjects,) led him to reject these works. With his decision also the most judicious modern scholars have, though not without exception, concurred; from these, I need now only mention one name, which in this place will long be held *πολλῶν ἀντάξιος*, that of our late lamented Professor of Divinity. “The writings,” he observes, “which bear these names demand some notice, as being as old as the second century; but if the

with the *Hermas* saluted by St. Paul, (Rom. xvi. 14.) was in fact a later individual of the same name, a brother of Pius the Roman Pontiff, in the middle of the second century; for we find that prelate appealing to his authority on the quarto-deciman controversy, in terms which clearly indicate the author of the *Pastor*. “*Hermæ Angelus Domini in habitu Pastoris apparuit, et precepit ei, ut Pascha die Dominico ab omnibus celebraretur.*”

names of Barnabas and Hermas were given to them that they might be received as works of the first century, there must have been an intention to deceive.” And he adds concerning one of them, the Shepherd of Hermas, a remark which might with equal justice be extended to both, “that the sentiments of piety and devotion which it contains are mixed up with so much of puerility and mysticism, as to detract considerably from its value.”

The earliest writer of the second century, whose remains we are called upon to examine as the next important link in the chain of Patristical testimony, is the martyr Ignatius, an immediate successor of the Apostles themselves, and reported to have been a pupil of the beloved disciple of our Lord. He was (probably by St. John himself) consecrated the second Bishop of the Syrian Antioch, the cradle of the Christian name, and from the beginning one of the most important Christian Churches. He suffered martyrdom in the ninth year of Trajan. For that emperor, (though in his rescript to Pliny he dis-

couraged the inquisition after Christians,) yet declared his judgment, that, if convicted, they were proper objects of punishment; and he therefore would have acted quite inconsistently with his own principles, had he hesitated to send one of their chief leaders to execution, when brought before his imperial judgment seat. This we are told happened when Trajan was marching through Antioch^y, flushed with his recent Dacian triumphs, and elate with the hopes inspired by the Parthian campaign to which he was proceeding. At such a moment, when, as we are told, he was resolved to crush every thing that opposed itself to his will, and especially what he considered the insolent obstinacy of the Christians, Ignatius was arraigned

^y The account of the martyrdom, places this in the ninth year of Trajan's reign, 107, the very year of his correspondence with Pliny. But whatever reliance we may be able to place on this narrative in other respects, it seems certain that this date must be erroneous; for it should appear, that Trajan never visited Antioch before 112. Bp. Pearson, in his Dissertation on the subject, assigns 116, (the 18th of Trajan,) as the most probable date.

before him, in the light of all others the most offensive to such a temper ; as not only guilty of disobedience himself, but as the teacher and instigator of disobedience in others. Thus arraigned, he resolutely confessed the faith of Christ, (whom he boasted in accordance with his name Theophorus to bear in his heart;) and when interrogated, “ Speakest thou of Him who was crucified under Pontius Pilate,” replied, “ I speak of Him who hath crucified my sin, and the author of it.” The sentence of the emperor was such, as the rule he had himself prescribed would require, “ We decree that Ignatius, who hath confessed that he carries in his breast Him that was crucified, shall himself be carried in chains by soldiers, to be thrown to wild beasts for the gratification of the people.” For this purpose he was transported to Rome. It neither seems easy to account for the execution being adjourned to so remote a distance, nor for the somewhat circuitous route adopted for the conveyance of the prisoner thither ; he set sail from Seleucia, and landed at Smyrna, where he remained

for some days. He does not appear to have been so guarded, as in any manner to have been precluded from the freest access of his friends ; for, while at Smyrna, he was in constant intercourse with Polycarp, formerly his fellow-disciple under St. John, and now Bishop of the Christians in that city. Here also he received deputations from three other neighbouring Churches^z, Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, headed by their Bishops ; and, during this interval, he found leisure to write Epistles to the three last-named Churches, and to despatch another to Rome.

From Smyrna, Ignatius continued his voyage to Troas, whence he wrote to the friendly Church and Bishop he had just left, and to the Philadelphians ; and thence crossing to Neapolis, traversed Macedonia ; again embarked on the Adriatic, and coasted

^z The Church of Ephesus was represented by its Bishop Onesimus ; as Grotius conjectures the same for whom St. Paul interceded with his master Philemon, having “ begotten him in his bonds ;” but, as Lardner remarks, this rests on no sufficient authority. Demas attended as Bishop of Magnesia, and Polybius as Bishop of Tralles.

round to the port of Rome ; and being there brought to the amphitheatre, on the thirteenth calends of January, he first prayed with the brethren, “ that God, in mercy to the Church, would cause the persecution to cease, and make their love towards each other abound more and more ;” he was then thrown to the wild beasts, and soon removed from this scene of persecution, to one where the oppressed find peace, and the oppressor cannot enter.

Polycarp collected all these Epistles ^a,

^a We may in these instances, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Philadelphia, compare the characters of these Churches, which we should infer from the Ignatian Epistles, addressed to them, with those contained in the Apocalyptic messages to their angels, published about twenty years previously. The Ephesians (Rev. ii. 2 and 6.) are warmly commended for their firm rejection of heretical teachers ; and Ignatius to the same effect (ad Ephes. ix.) says, “ I have heard of some who have visited you, bringing erroneous doctrine whom ye would not suffer to sow among you ; but stopped your ears that ye might not receive the things which were sown of them.” In the other two cases, Smyrna and Philadelphia, the character of the Churches is described both in the Revelation and these Epistles, in terms of high but general praise, for the constancy of their faith, but without any thing suggesting a more particular comparison ; unless

transmitted them, together with an Epistle of his own, to the Philippians; who had requested him to procure for them these documents, having themselves apparently conversed with the Martyr in his passage through their country. He adds, "that they might hence derive much profit, as these Epistles were full of faith and patience, and contained much matter of edification."

This Epistle of Polycarp is still extant; its genuineness is undisputed, and appears indisputable; it must therefore be considered quite a sufficient guarantee to vouch that the Epistles of Ignatius themselves are genuine. They have also been recited by Eusebius, and referred to by many early Fathers; the first copies of them, however, published after the revival of literature, were not the genuine originals, but a mere diffusive paraphrase; that

it should be thought that the hostile influence of the Jewish party, (Rev. iii. 9.) may throw light on the passage of Ignatius' Epistle, (ad Philadelph. c. 6.) in which he cautions them against Judaizing teachers. It is clear, that the prevalence of a Jewish party in the district might operate in a double direction, by internal corruption, as well as external opposition.

original text was first recovered in a Latin Version, by the admirable sagacity of our own most learned countryman Usher ; and the circumstances of its detection form a most interesting piece of literary history^b. But this is not the place for such discussions ; and I shall only observe, that it is gratifying to find that we owe the first appearance of the two earliest Fathers of the Church to Protestant England ; and as it must be especially interesting to us in this place to remember, to the press of our own University ; for, as we have already noticed, the Epistle of Clement Romanus was first hence edited by our distinguished and general scholar Junius, and the genuine text of Polycarp was likewise here published by Usher, when driven by the disturbances of the times from Ireland, he resided an illustrious exile within our sheltering walls. So that Oxford may fairly boast to have restored to the Church her two most ancient authorities.

The Epistles written by Ignatius, under the circumstances I have described, must

^b See Appendix B.

at once recal to the mind acquainted with the history of our own Church, the admirable Epistles which are said so much to have advanced the cause of our Reformation, written by her first Bishops under the very same circumstances of present confinement and approaching martyrdom ; when in this very city, they also were called to give a witness unto death in the same sacred cause, the truth of Christ ; and it may be added by the same power, *Rome*, changed indeed in title from Imperial to Papal, but in persecution and idolatry semper eadem.

To the Epistles thus despatched from the death journey of this earlier Martyr, we cannot and ought not to look without the reverence due to his apostolical age and constant faith ; but we shall assuredly be disappointed if we expect to find in them any thing at all calculated to throw additional illustration on the doctrines of the Faith, as delivered in the New Testament ; or to supply us with any clue to unravel the true meaning of the Scriptures which they do not themselves as freely and as fully afford.

The erroneous opinion against which Ignatius appears most anxious to guard those whom he addresses, was the heresy of the Docetæ; a Gnostic sect, which imagined the body of our Lord to be a visionary appearance rather than a real material substance. In defending against these heretics the reality of the circumstances of our Lord's history, he necessarily himself affirms the cardinal points of his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection^b; and he particularly points it out as a fatal objection to the hypothesis he opposes, that it virtually undermined the truth and efficacy of Christ's atonement. He farther expresses in a marked antithesis^c, the blended human and divine nature of Him who was "God in the flesh, carnal and spiritual; create and uncreate; eternal life

^b See Epistles to the Magnesians, (c. 11.) to the Trallians, (c. 9.) the Epistle to the Smyrnæans presents the most continuous and sustained argument against the Docetæ.

^c Ad Ephesos, c. 7. p. 13. Εἰς ἰατρός ἐστιν σαρκικός τε καὶ πνευματικός γενητὸς καὶ ἀγέννητος, ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος Θεὸς, ἐν θανάτῳ ζωὴ ἀληθινῇ καὶ ἐκ Μαρίας καὶ ἐκ Θεοῦ, πρῶτον παθητὸς, καὶ τότε ἀπαθής.

in death ; of the Virgin Mary and of God ; of a nature passible and impassible.”

These are the clearest doctrinal statements. Of the tone of his moral exhortations, the following extract will afford a favourable specimen^d. “Pray for other men without ceasing, that they also may attain unto God ; for to all of them is the hope of repentance given. Place then before them the opportunity of deriving instruction, at least from your works. To their wrath be ye mild ; to their haughty discourse be ye meek ; to their blasphemies oppose your prayers ; to their error your stedfastness in the faith. Be ye gentle as they are fierce ; never imitating their example. Let us be found their brothers by our kindness. Let us endeavour to be followers of our Lord ; like him let each submit to suffer wrong, to be defrauded, to be despised. Let no plant of Satan be found in you, but in all purity and temperance abide in the Lord Jesus in body and in spirit^e ;—the perfect faith and love which is

^d Ad Ephes. c. 10. p. 14.

^e Ad Ephes. c. 14. p. 15.

in him are the beginning and end of life ; faith is the beginning, and the end is love, and these two in their union are from God ; and all other qualities which conduce to a fair and good life follow in their train. For no men sincerely professing faith can abide in sin ; nor can he who hath gained the spirit of love still hate. The tree is manifest from its fruits, and true professors of Christianity by their deeds. It is not now a work of outward profession, but in the power of genuine faith, if a man be found faithful to the end ; ἄμεινόν ἐστιν σιωπᾶν καὶ εἶναι, ἢ λαλοῦντα μὴ εἶναι. Καλὸν τὸ διδάσκειν ἐὰν ὁ λέγων ποιῇ.”

All Christians of every sect will agree in admiring these sentiments ; but the great point on which in every Epistle Ignatius most strenuously and repeatedly insists, is the necessity of a strict conformity to the discipline of the Church, and a devoted submission to Episcopal authority, which he makes to rest on the same principles with our obedience to our Lord himself. It is needless to remark that such passages have afforded the great reason why so

many writers of the Presbyterian party have been so reluctant to admit the authenticity of these remains ; and we, while it is most satisfactory to our minds to find so early a testimony in confirmation of the primitive and apostolical origin of the constitution faithfully preserved by our own Church, yet even we ourselves shall probably shrink from some of the language employed in these Epistles, as seeming excessive and overstrained. We do trust indeed that our Episcopal authority is in and through the Lord, and most suitable for the edification of his body the Church ; and we may hope that this was all that Ignatius meant to imply ; but we must regret, that in the somewhat overcharged and inflated style of his rhetoric, he has too often been betrayed into expressions, which seem almost to imply a parity of authority over the Church, between its earthly superintendent, and its heavenly head^f. We must,

^f Ad Ephes. c. 6. Τὸν οὖν Ἐπίσκοπον δῆλον ὅτι ὡς αὐτὸν τὸν Κύριον δεῖ προβλέπειν. ad Trall. c. 2. Τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ ὑποτάσσεσθε ὡς Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. ad Trall. c. 3. Ὁμοίως πάντες ἐντρέπεσθωσαν τοὺς διακόνους ὡς ἐντολὴν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

however, carefully keep in mind the peculiarly exalted character and importance of the Episcopal office in that day, when the star of the Church was rising amidst lowering clouds and fierce tempests, the primitive Bishops must indeed be considered as the immediate and like minded successors of the Apostles ; men identified with the principles and progress of the faith ; faithful shepherds, ready to lay down their lives for their flocks^ε ; sound instructors, to have deserted whose guidance would necessarily have exposed the Churches committed to their care to be betrayed into the most dangerous spiritual error, by those who were lying in wait to deceive. If we wish to learn what was really the character of these Bishops, whose authority this Father so earnestly exhorts the Churches to regard as sacred, we may turn to his Epistle to his brother Bishop, and afterwards brother

καὶ τὸν Ἐπίσκοπον ὡς ὄντα υἱὸν τοῦ πατρὸς, τοὺς δὲ Πρεσβυτέρους ὡς συνέδριον Θεοῦ καὶ ὡς σύνδεσμον Ἀποστόλων.

^ε Thus Ignatius repeatedly professes himself to be Ἀντίψυχος with the Churches in this high sense ; that is, ready to give his life up for them. See Eph. 21. Smyrn. 10. Polyc. ii. 6.

martyr, Polycarp. “ Support all men, as the Lord supporteth thee. Endure all men in love, as indeed thou dost. Give thy leisure to incessant prayers. Pray for a still larger understanding than thou already hast. Watch, having an unsleeping spirit. Speak to each individual as God giveth thee help. Bear the infirmities of all. Strive as a well-trained wrestler ; knowing that where there is greater labour, there is greater gain. If thou lovest only thy good disciples, what thanks are due to thee ; but rather endeavour to subdue the more troublesome by thine own meekness.”

If the faithful Pastors, in that age set over their flocks in the Lord, were indeed formed in heart and conduct on precepts like these ; can we doubt that they would be truly worthy of all observance for their works’ sake ; that the spiritual interests of those flocks would of necessity be identified with the respect and deference they should pay to the counsels and admonition proceeding from a source so pure and holy ?

The only Christian ceremony expressly

mentioned by Ignatius is the Eucharist; and here his language strongly inculcates the real presence, but cannot require to be understood in a corporeal and carnal sense: thus he earnestly exhorts the Philadelphians^b to partake this sacrament, “for there is but one, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the unity of his blood, and one altar.” Again in his Epistle to the Smyrnæansⁱ, he reproaches the Docetæ for abstaining from the Eucharist, “because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Christ.”

It would do little credit either to the head or heart to be severe in animadverting on the style of a writer under such circumstances; that style indeed, it must be confessed, is too often turgid, inflated, and extravagant^k, as especially when writing

^b Ad Philadelph. c. 4. He here proceeds, adverting to his favourite topic, to compare this unity to that of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons.

ⁱ Ad Smyrn. c. 7.

^k Cicero, in his rhetorical works, animadverts on the marked difference between the simple elegance of the Attic style, and the turgid phraseology adopted by the Asiatic Greek writers; and certainly the compositions of this Father present an eminent example of the contrast.

to the Romans, he bursts forth on the subject of his martyrdom into expressions far beyond the sober language of nature and truth¹; and still more when he several times appears to speak of his sufferings as if they were expiations offered by himself for the Church^m. But we must surely make

¹ Ad Rom. c. 6. "Suffer me to be the food of wild beasts, by which I may attain unto God. I am the wheat of God, and by the teeth of wild beasts I shall be ground, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ." This passage is quoted by Irenæus, v. 28. And again, c. 5. "I long to enjoy the beasts prepared for me. I desire them to fall on me with their fiercest violence. I will allow them to devour me, and not to abstain, as from fear they have left some untouched. If they should appear reluctant, I will myself force them to fall upon me."

^m Eph. 8. Περίψημα ὑμῶν, καὶ ἀγνίζωμαι ὑμῶν Ἐφεσίων Ἐκκλησίας. Cotelerius translates, *Purgamentum vestri sum, et piaculum efficiar pro vestra Ephesiorum Ecclesia*; and Wake, "My soul be for yours, and I myself the expiatory offering for your Church." But the passage appears corrupt, and the paraphrastic edition gives a totally different interpretation; following which, Ruchat proposes to read, Περίψημα ὑμῶν ἐκβάλλετε, καὶ ἀγνίζεται ὑμῶν Ἐφεσίων Ἐκκλησία, 'Cast out your offscouring, and let your Church be purified;' a meaning perfectly free from all objection.

Again, Trall. 13. Ἀγνίζετε ὑμῶν τὸ ἐμὸν πνεῦμα, οὐ μόνον νῦν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅταν. Θεοῦ ἐπιτύχω. This passage is unin-

every allowance for the unavoidable excitement of such moments ; and we know in how many minds strong nervous excitement has a natural tendency to find a vent in exaggerated language ; and he himself tells us of his circumstances at the time. “ From Syria to Rome I fight with beasts both by sea and by land, by night and by day being bound to ten leopards”, that is to say, a band of soldiers, who when kindly treated become the worse.” He appears also to have possessed a natural vehemence of character, too often betraying him into language which it is impossible to acquit of violence and extravagance ; but how often does not the

telligibly corrupt ; Vossius reads the first word *ἀγνισμα*, and Wake translates, “ My soul be your expiation not only now, but when I shall have attained unto God.” I would suggest, however, placing a stop after *ἀγνίζετε*, and referring it to the former sentence, which would then stand, *Ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶτε, ἀγνίζετε*, Love and purify each other. My soul is yours, &c. This would easily correct the corruption both of sense and doctrine.

ⁿ A portion of the imperial guard appear to have borne the device, and name, and not improbably fierce character also, of this wild animal.

precious gold of zeal for the truth become dim from such alloys of human infirmity. We should mention such things then with regret and reluctance, and only lest silence should seem to imply approbation.

Ignatius presents repeated allusions to almost all the books of the New Testament, but only directly quotes the Epistle to the Ephesians^o.

Turn we now from Ignatius, to him whom we lately heard the former so emphatically addressing on his Episcopal duties, to Polycarp. In his important charge over the Church of Smyrna, we have every testimony that Polycarp fully realized the character of piety and benevolence thus chalked out by his martyred friend; and he likewise, though not until the close of a long life of usefulness, was called to bear the last proof of faith at the burning stake. Irenæus, a Father who flourished half a century later than the times of which I am now speaking, had been in his youth intimately acquainted

^o Lardner, *Credibility*, i. p. 316, exhibits fifty-five of these quotations and allusions.

with Polycarp; he tells us he had been “ ab Apostolis in Asia in ea quæ est Smyrnis Ecclesia constitutus Episcopus, quem et nos vidimus in prima nostra ætate^p.” Eusebius^q has preserved an Epistle from Irenæus to Florinus, in which he gives us the following most interesting and graphic description of those early reminiscences. “ I much better remember the affairs of that time, than those which have recently occurred. For thus the things we learn in our childhood grow up with the soul, and unite themselves to it. Insomuch that I could now tell thee the exact place where the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, all the manner of his life, and the very form of his person. How he used to relate his conversations with John and others who had seen the Lord, and to repeat all their sayings, and all that he had heard concerning the Lord, his doctrines and his miracles, from them who were eye-witnesses of the word of life; all which Polycarp related agreeably

^p Irenæi l. iii. c. 3.

^q Eusebii Hist. Eccles. l. v. c. 26.

to the Scriptures.” We may fully collect from this last sentence, that it is this exact coincidence with Scripture which was even then considered as stamping the sure seal to the testimony of this very early link in the chain of tradition.

The only writing of Polycarp which remains to the Church, is his Epistle to the Philippians, with which, as we have already seen, he transmitted to them the collection of the Ignatian Epistles^r. This writing breathes throughout the most truly evangelical spirit of holiness, gentleness, and love, just such as we might expect

^r It is clear from the expressions in c. 14. “What ye know certainly of Ignatius and of those that are with him signify unto us,” that it must have been written as soon as Polycarp had received intelligence of the martyr’s passage though Philippi, and before his arrival at Rome, and its event had been announced to him. From a passage in the commencement of the Epistle we may also infer, that the Philippians had been prompt to offer every service in their power to the holy captive. “I rejoiced greatly with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye received as ye ought the models of true love, and accompanied those who were bound with chains, the fitting ornament of Saints, the crowns of those who are chosen of God and our Lord.

from the friend and pupil of the beloved disciple of the Lord ; from him who had drunk the pure stream of faith so freshly from its sacred fountain head. It is written in a style of dignified simplicity altogether worthy of its matter. With what unfeigned amazement the mind of one so holy and humble of heart, would have shrunk from the idea that the time could ever arrive when it should be attempted to place the authority of himself, or any of his uninspired brethren, on the same level with that of the inspired Apostolical writings, we may well judge, from the following quotation, which occurs very near the commencement of this Epistle. “ These precepts of righteousness I write, not as arrogating any thing to myself, but because you have invited me. *But neither I*, nor any one else like me, is able to attain the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul. If ye study the Epistles which he wrote unto you, ye shall then indeed be able to become edified in the faith given unto you. That faith which is the mother of all ; which is followed by hope ; and ushered

in by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbour^s.”

Polycarp repeatedly quotes several of the Pauline Epistles, and expressly refers to them as to the authoritative Scripture; for he thus prefaces one of his citations; “^t I trust ye are well exercised in the Holy Scriptures; and in them it is said, Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath^u.”

Like Ignatius, Polycarp exhorts those whom he addresses, to obey the Presbyters and Deacons^x set over them, on the principle of their obedience to God and Christ; and, like him also, he lays down such a character for the bearers of these spiritual

^s Polycarpus ad Philip. c. 3.

^t Ibid. c. 12.

^u Lardner, i. has observed, that “the first words, Be ye angry and sin not, are in the LXX version of Ps. iv. 4.” But as the latter advice, Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, is no where found in the Old Testament, and both these precepts are together in the Epistle to the Ephesians, iv. 26. it seems to me that Polycarp does expressly refer to that, and calls it Scripture.

^x End of c. 5. he does not specify the Bishop, possibly from a fear of appearing to magnify his own office.

offices, as must convince us how important to the best interests of their flocks must have been the influence of men, who at all came up to the prescribed standard, “ Let the Presbyters be of tender bowels ; merciful to all ; leading back whatever has gone astray ; visiting all the infirm ; never neglecting the widow, orphan, or poor ; always providing that is good in the sight of God and man. Abstaining from all wrath ; from all respect of persons ; from all unjust judgment. Far remote from all covetousness ; not hastily giving credit to evil reports ; not abrupt (*ἀποτόμοι*) in judgment ; knowing that we all are debtors through sin ; and, therefore, if we pray the Lord to forgive us, ought ourselves to be likewise forgiving.”

This is indeed admirable, and truly Apostolical. While then we are justly anxious to establish the validity of our ministerial commission, by tracing its descent through these immediate successors of the Apostles, let us regard it as no less important, that we should endeavour, by all diligence and prayer, to conform our hearts

and lives to the high ministerial standard, prescribed by the authority of these holy men. Thus may we, indeed, under God's grace and blessing, shew ourselves the genuine inheritors of that sacred deposit, transmitted to us through these holy channels. The true successor of the Apostles must ever be approved to the Church, by doing the works of an Apostle; must be the heir of their faith; must be the follower of their practice. Unaccompanied by this Apostolical character, every other pretension were but vain in itself, ridiculous in its assumption, destructive in its consequences.

The mildness and gentleness of Polycarp's own disposition, (so exactly in conformity with what he requires from others,) is beautifully illustrated in his remarks on the painful case of Valens, a married Presbyter of the Philippian Church, who appears to have fallen, as well as his wife, into a double adultery. "I am greatly afflicted," he declares, "for Valens, that he should so little have remembered the place that he held among you." He then

proceeds earnestly to exhort them to gather from such a fall a lesson of warning, and to learn the necessity of double watchfulness, to guard their own hearts against the inroads of the like evil passions; but with regard to the unhappy criminals themselves, he thus concludes; “ Wherefore, brethren, I am exceedingly sorry both for him and for his wife. May God grant them true repentance, and be ye also moderate on this occasion; and consider not such as enemies; but call them back, as suffering and erring members; that ye may save your whole body, for in so doing ye shall edify yourselves^y. ”

How beautifully does Polycarp here exemplify the direction of St. Paul, “ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted^z. ”

^y Chap. 11.

^z Gal. vi. 1. I may observe, that we here find nothing of the laborious circumstantial of penance so strenuously insisted on by Tertullian a century later, and still less of the theory that arose on such terms. The door of

This single and short Epistle can hardly be expected to contain any important addition of evidence or illustration to points of Christian doctrine. It does, however, present very distinct recognitions of the eternal priesthood and atonement of Christ, and of salvation through him by grace and not by works; but as in these acknowledgments he only copies the very words of the apostolical Epistles, it is evident he cannot afford any accession to their recorded testimony; but undoubtedly, the copiousness and exactness of his quotations from so many portions of the New Testament, is of very high importance; because, in the first place it sufficiently attests his opinion that these inspired writings were the great and all-sufficient standard of Christian faith and practice; and secondly, from the proof thus offered, that these sacred documents existed in his age under the same forms which have descended to ours ^a.

readmission to the Church was but once open; this, however, may be traced in the apocryphal and mystical work ascribed to Hermas.

^a How completely this Epistle bears the character of

In this scriptural spirit, Polycarp enforces various relative duties, and general habits of patience, perseverance, and stedfastness in the faith ; the whole of the Epistle may

a scriptural canto, may be seen by analyzing a passage taken altogether at hazard. C. 12.

“ Now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ¹, and he himself, who is our everlasting High Priest², build you up in faith³ and truth, and in all meekness and unity, and in patience and long suffering⁴, and forbearance and chastity ; and grant unto you a lot and portion among the saints⁵, and unto us with you, and unto all that are under heaven, who shall believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in his Father who raised him from the dead⁶. Pray for all saints⁷ ; pray also for kings and authorities, and princes⁸, and for those who persecute and hate you⁹, and for the enemies of the cross of Christ, that your fruit may be manifest unto all, and that ye may be perfect in Christ¹⁰.”

In this short Epistle, which is only about the length of that of St. Paul to the same Church, Lardner has collected (Credibility i. 328.) at least fifty most distinct references to the New Testament from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, from the Acts, from the Epistles of Paul to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, and 1 and 2 Timothy, Hebrews, also from 1 Peter, 1 John, and Jude.

¹ Rom. xv. 6. 2 Cor. i. 3. xi. 31. Eph. i. 3. 1 Pet. i. 3.

² Heb. iv. 14. vi. 20. vii. 3.

³ Acts xx. 32. Col. ii. 7.

⁴ Gal. v. 22. Eph. iv. 2. Col. iii. 12.

⁵ Col. i. 12.

⁶ Gal. i. 1.

⁷ Eph. vi. 18.

⁸ 1 Tim. ii. 2.

⁹ Matt. v. 44.

¹⁰ Col. i. 28.

be said very closely to reflect that of St. Paul to the same Church, and the passages I have already quoted will, I trust, afford sufficient specimens of its general style.

The services of this truly apostolical character, were spared to the Church for a long series of years after the martyrdom of his friend. The only specific matter which can challenge our particular attention in this protracted course of Christian usefulness, is one which at the same time illustrates the high and general respect which waited on this holy man of God, and proves to us that even in this earliest age of the Church, while tradition was most fresh, it did not prevent differences on ceremonial points, the very points which it might have been expected most exactly to have prescribed. It likewise displays in a very gratifying manner the just and liberal spirit in which the Church, accurately distinguishing between the essentials of faith and the externals of form, prevented such discrepancies from growing into schisms. The point to which I allude is the well-known quarto-deciman contro-

versy, as it is called; that is, the question on what day the festival in commemoration of the resurrection of our Lord should be properly observed; the one party maintained that an exact correspondence with the original passover should fix the precise period to whatever day of the week this should point^b; the other party contended that the first day of the week ought invariably to be adhered to in this commemoration, and therefore fixed on the Sunday next following the Paschal full moon, (or fourteenth of the Jewish month Nisan.) The Eastern Churches held the former

^b The expressions would often seem to indicate that this party celebrated the resurrection on the very day of the Jewish passover; but it seems more probable they took this as the cardinal point only of their calculation, and allowed the proper interval to the day of the resurrection; but this would open up another disputed question, namely, whether the last supper of our Lord was actually itself the passover, and celebrated on the usual day, (the fourteenth day of Nisan, the first lunar month of their year,) or whether he anticipated the common observance; and the true Paschal sacrifice was on the very day when its great antitype was himself offered; on the first supposition an interval of three days, on the second an interval of two, should have been allowed.

opinion, and claimed to have derived their practice from the Apostle John; the Western Churches embraced the latter, and referred it to the Apostle Peter. When Polycarp visited Rome during the prelacy of Anicetus, this point was amicably discussed between them, and both agreed that each might safely follow the customs of their respective Churches, on the avowed principle, that variety on such minor points was perfectly consistent with the essential unity of faith, ἡ διαφωνία τῆς Νηστείας τὴν ὁμόνοιαν τῆς πίστεως συνίστησι^c; and in proof that the bond of unity could not be in the slightest degree relaxed by such differences, the Roman prelate allotted to his Asiatic visitant the honour of presiding in the consecration of the Eucharist in place of himself. We learn all these particulars from Irenæus, the pupil of Polycarp, who, about forty years later, wrote an Epistle on a more angry revival of the same contro-

^c See Epistle of Irenæus on this controversy addressed to Victor, preserved in Eusebius, (Hist. Ecc. l. v. c. 23.) the authority for all these particulars; they must have occurred between the years 158 and 168, those of the consecration and death of Anicetus.

versy to Victor, a later successor of Anicetus, who, departing from the moderation of his predecessor, and in a temper more resembling that which afterwards distinguished his see, proceeded to excommunicate the Asiatic Churches ; here then we see that the Bishops of Rome already began to contradict one another ; but there must have been less inconsistency in this, in an age when as yet they had not learnt to pretend to infallibility, and when, as Eusebius informs us, sundry other Bishops scrupled not sharply to reprehend their brother of Rome for his uncharitable conduct ; among these was Irenæus, who, with this view, adduced the facts concerning Polycarp and Anicetus, which have been above stated ^d.

^d “ Thus,” says Eusebius, “ did Irenæus justify the etymology of his name, and approve himself actually as well as nominally a peacemaker to the Church. Irenæus appears himself to have followed the practice of the Roman Church, therefore his remonstrances to Victor were not dictated by the spirit of self-defence, but of general charity. A century later the Roman practice was generally established by a decree of the Council of Nice. It is known, however, that the early British and

But this subject has led us to anticipate, and we must now return to Polycarp, and accompany him to the triumphant, though suffering, close of his long and valuable career. His blameless life, with those of many other pious Christians, fell a sacrifice to the stoical pride of the self-styled philosopher, and really heartless persecutor, Marcus Aurelius^e. An interesting narrative of his martyrdom remains written by the members of his own Church, who were spectators of the melancholy scene, to the Church of Philomilium in Pontus. This contains a most striking picture of his firm yet calm demeanour throughout; and of the temperate yet persevering constancy

Irish Churches had embraced the Asiatic quaterdeciman system, and retained it as late as the seventh century.

* I here follow the authority of Eusebius and Jerome; it is generally placed in the year 167. Bp. Pearson indeed argues in favour of its having taken place under Antoninus Pius, and is inclined to assign a date as early as 148; but as the evidence in favour of his interview with Anicetus while Bishop of Rome, as before cited, appears quite indisputable, and as this Prelate was not consecrated till ten years after that earlier date, it appears quite inadmissible.

which always forms the character of true courage, as manifested in his conduct ; and this is placed in the stronger light, as contrasted with the more presumptuous rashness, and less sustained purpose, of some others, who with hasty enthusiasm threw themselves at first unnecessarily forward, to brave the danger, yet shrunk when the hour of trial actually came. We find Polycarp not disdaining to withdraw himself for a while from the storm, first seeking the retirement of a neighbouring farm, and afterwards of a more remote village. But when the party sent to arrest him surrounded his retreat, and he felt that the hour marked by Providence was come, we see the venerable old man meekly yielding himself, and requesting only the indulgence of an hour's private prayer. We are then called to admire his resolute, but respectful, answers to the interrogations of the Proconsul ; “ How can I, saith he, ever deny my King and my Saviour, whom I have now served fourscore and six years, and who has never yet treated me with unfaithfulness ! ”

We behold him enabled by the strength of the Lord, in whom he trusted, to stand immovably amidst the flames, when breathing forth his soul in the voice of praise and thanksgiving, he uttered these last words, “ O Father of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have known thee ; God of all the angelic powers, of all creatures that live here, and of all saints that shall live eternally in thy presence ; I thank thee that thou hast graciously vouchsafed me this day and this hour, and hast allotted me a portion unto the resurrection of everlasting life, among the number of martyrs, the people of Christ. Wherefore for all things I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, through the everlasting High Priest Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all glory through eternity.” The flames at first, we are told, arched in a vault around him, and the impatient, or perhaps compassionate, executioner at once dispatched him with a sword. We can well enter into the feeling so full of affectionate reverence yet so remote from idolatrous su-

perstition, with which the members of his Church collected his remains^f. When taunted for this by the insulting Jews, as though they were ready to forsake Christ, and to fix on this martyr as a new object of their worship, they forcibly observe, “how ignorant was this, to believe that we could ever forsake the Saviour of the world, and worship another; him alone we worship, for he alone is the Son of God; but the martyrs we love, as fellow-disciples, and followers of the same Lord.”

There are, indeed, intermingled in this simple and affecting narrative, two or three incidents, of signs vouchsafed for the warning and encouragement of the martyr, to

^f Their expressions are indeed warm and enthusiastic, but yet when coupled with the explanation they themselves subjoin, (as above quoted,) ought not surely to expose them to the charges justly incurred by later superstitions. They tell us that they collected his bones as more precious than pearls and gold, and buried them where in future times they might meet to celebrate the day of his martyrdom, as that of his birth to a better life.

which a supernatural colour is given^ε. But although many perhaps may regard

ε These supernatural interferences, as recorded in the Epistle relating the martyrdom of Polycarp, are the following.

1. A warning is said to have been given to him of the manner of his death before his apprehension, by his dreaming that his pillow was consumed with flames. But similar dreams are assuredly of not uncommon occurrence, whether they be considered as actual premonitions, or only coincidences to be accounted for from the state of the mind at the time.

2. At his answer before the Proconsul, it was reported that some heard, or imagined they heard, a voice from heaven encouraging him, "Be bold, O Polycarp, and act manfully;" but it is added, that this was heard only by very few, because of the tumult. How easily then might such an error, if error it must be esteemed, be attributed to a perfectly innocent delusion.

3. When it is said that the flames arched as a vault over his body, leaving it unharmed and resplendent in the midst, the reporters undoubtedly, from their manner of relating it, convey the impression, that they considered the circumstance as miraculous; but how easily may a perfectly natural configuration of the flame have worn such an appearance to enthusiastic minds prepared so to regard it? How commonly, in the Marian persecution, was it not very long before the flames attacked the life? and it would have been merciful had the sword of the confector been at hand to dispatch the victim.

In these remarks, I have confined myself to the genuine text of this Epistle, as preserved in the fourth book

as questionable the continuance of such direct acts of intervention, even in that early age; still all these circumstances may very easily admit of an explanation as founded on real events, magnified and coloured as viewed through the medium of an excited imagination, without in the least impugning the general fidelity of the narrative, which has the very strongest support in the consistent tenor of its internal evidence.

The documents we have now considered must, I conceive, to every candid mind, appear of the very highest interest and importance. It must be quite obvious, that every system of theological education must be regarded as altogether incomplete, which does not include the study of these remains

of the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, c. 15. where the greater portion is transcribed; and cited also by Rufinus. A subsequent interpolation, introduced into the text as usually published, represents a dove as having issued from his wound together with his blood. Jortin with much shrewdness attributes this corruption to the mistake of the copyist, in reading *περιστέρα* for *ἐπ' ἀγιστέρα*; other conjectures are mentioned in the interesting note on this passage in the excellent recent edition of Mr. Jacobson.

as an essential object ; for it is through their means that we ascend, step by step, to the original promulgation of the Apostolical Scriptures themselves ; and, without such an investigation, we must remain very imperfectly acquainted with the strength of the historico-critical evidence, by which the authenticity of these sacred oracles of our faith is fully guaranteed. And, surely, higher feelings than those connected with any critical enquiry, however important, must be kindled, when we look back, through the mists of ages, to the men and times we have been now considering. If our first moralist could justly pity the cold insensibility of a heart, dead to the associations of place and scene, how much more of moral power must belong to the memory of persons and of deeds. Had we lived in those early days, how high a privilege should we have esteemed it, could we have obtained any opportunity of conversing with men, who could repeat to us all that they had themselves heard from the constant companions of our blessed Lord, through his earthly ministry ; from men

whose eyes had seen the glory of the only-begotten, full of grace of truth ; whose ears had drank in the words of life from his divine lips ? Could we place ourselves in the situation of Irenæus, with what delight should we have sat at the feet of Polycarp, while he reported to us all the lively recollections of the beloved disciple John ? Must we not enter into the feelings so well expressed in a fragment of a Christian of that age^h ; “ If by any chance an elder presented himself to me who had conversed with the Apostles, how eagerly did I enquire from him all their sayings ; but what said Andrew ? what Peter ? what James ? what John ? what Matthew ? or any other of the Lord’s disciples ? for I did not conceive it possible that I should derive so much profit from books, ὅσον παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενοῦσης.” To us, indeed, this living and abiding power of the actual voice is lost ; but surely we must be indifferent to some of the best feelings of the human heart, if we neglect the intercourse still permitted, through their works

^h Papias, preserved by Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. l. iii. c. 35.

by which these companions of the companions of the Lord still speak to his Church.

Nor shall we find these remains interesting only from such associations; considered in themselves, they are pregnant with edification ; the Epistles of Clement, and Polycarp especially, breathe a spirit so truly Apostolical, that we almost feel, that when Paul was taken away, he left his mantle behind him.

Such are the feelings of affectionate respect, with which we shall rightly use these ancient and venerable writings ; but this is far remote from the abuse which would elevate them in any manner to that place of authority, belonging of right to the records of inspiration alone. If we properly study these valuable writings, we shall see that they principally claim our regard, from their own agreement with the volume of Scripture, or rather their entire dependence upon it ; and that the minds of these writers themselves were so thoroughly imbued with their Bible, that its very words appear to have entered as an essential ele-

ment into all their modes of thinking and expressing themselves.

The study of these writings will also remove the idea, that, because the body of truth contained in the Scriptures is *dispersed* throughout the whole mass, instead of being digested into a regular systematic form, we ought to look for some more systematic catechetical instruction in Christian truth, from the records of Patristical tradition; since, in fact, far from finding any thing of this kind in these early remains, we have seen only works of a structure, in this respect, exactly the same as that of the Scriptures; and from which the task of eliciting the whole body of Christian truth must be equally laborious, and would assuredly be far less successful, the documents themselves being so much less copious.

And farther, since we find these few and brief undoubted remains of the first Christian age floating amidst a vast sea of forgeries, this must add incalculable and hopeless embarrassment to one who should seek to build up his faith on such materials;

nor can it be said, that these difficulties need not affect the common Christian, who may be well content to leave such questions to the investigation of scholars, and acquiesce in their judgment, as in a competent authority; for the scholar himself will, in very many cases, be unable to arrive at more than probability, far too weak a foundation in matters of faith; nor can such questions, as to the authenticity of particular writings, be by any means considered as questions of curiosity only, for they often affect the essentials of faith. Thus a second series of Epistles, attributed to Ignatius, and indeed the first published and interpolated edition of the series generally received, are considered to be deeply tainted with the Arian heresy, and, on this ground, found a zealous defender in Whiston.

Surely then it must be equally injurious, on the one hand, to shut our eyes to the just and high claims which these early Christian documents must advance to our regard; and, on the other, to assign to them a place to which they never them-

selves aspire, and for which they are altogether unsuited. And, as an attempt to bend the standard of opinion violently on one side, will always tend to produce an effort of revulsion with equal violence in an opposite direction, we cannot be surprised, that, while some appear to employ language of almost superstitious veneration, others have been betrayed into terms of obloquy and contempt, still more painful to the holy and humble mind.

But although we may not accept these human writings as any sufficient *foundation for our faith*, which can rest on the authority of divine inspiration alone, still they are most useful as preserving to us the very form of the Church, as it first came from the hands of its inspired architects; its original constitution, and its primitive discipline. For all these things must (it seems clear) come down to us from these primitive sources, not indeed with an authority directly divine, but yet, surely, stamped with a sanction so high and venerable, that lightly and wantonly to depart

from them, must ever be accounted the part of an overweening and unjustifiable presumption.

It must therefore be most satisfactory to us, to be able to ascertain with the clearest evidence, from these early documents, that our own tabernacle has been faithfully constructed in exact accordance with the pattern, which may, without irreverence, be said to have been once displayed in the mount.

The last point to which I would now advert, is the striking illustration afforded by the remains we have now been considering, to the general unity of spirit which animated the whole extent of the Christian Church in that early age, and the general intercourse and communion which prevailed between its several members.

Thus we have seen Clement of Rome exerting his best endeavours to appease dissensions prevailing in the Church of Corinth. Thus we behold the Bishops and other deputies, from many of the Asiatic Churches, hastening to Smyrna to obtain a last interview with Ignatius, on his jour-

ney to the scene of martyrdom, mutually to exchange the consolations of Christian faith and hope. And we found this candidate for that glorious though agonizing crown, himself in return evincing the warmest interest in all these Churches, by his Epistles to them; while he calculated on their manifesting an equal concern for his own bereaved Antioch, and therefore requested them to send emissaries for its comfort and edification. And the same spirit dictated the Epistle which Polycarp himself, on the same occasion, transmitted to the Philippians, with copies of the former Martyr's Epistles, which they had so earnestly desired to see; and when Polycarp himself was ultimately called to breathe out his soul amidst the flames, in accents of grateful praise to his God and Saviour, we have heard the affecting account which his own Church forwarded to the opposite extremity of the Asiatic peninsula. The general feeling of every member of every Church appears to have been *Christianus sum Christianum nihil a me alienum peto*. The Christian traveller was then *eo nomine*

secure of a reception, rather brotherly than merely hospitable, in every city where Christians were to be found; and the letters of communion γράμματα κοινωνικὰ which he received from his own Bishop, were a free passport to the religious privileges of every other Church. Jerusalem was then indeed built as a city at unity in itself; and we have seen, that while the *essentials* of the faith were guarded with the most scrupulous strictness, no minor differences of ceremonial observances were allowed to interrupt that unity. As the good providence of our God has guided our own Church so faithfully to preserve the external discipline of the primitive age, may he also bless us with his internal Spirit of love, enabling us ever to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!

LECTURE III.



1 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world ; but we speak the wisdom of God.

IN the previous and introductory portion of this course of Lectures, we have already considered the earliest and most remarkable, but, alas ! few and scanty, monuments of the first age of Christian antiquity. We have examined the relics still preserved by the Church of the compositions of the friends and fellow-workers of the Apostles, and their actual pupils and immediate successors ; and we have satisfactorily seen, that these faithful followers were in all respects likeminded with their inspired guides and teachers.

We shall next be introduced to writers of a very different class from these holy and simple primitive advocates of the truth. In the beginning of Christianity, it pleased

its divine Author to choose the weak things of this world to confound the strong, and its foolish things to triumph over those which were accounted wise, that the excellency of the power might be more manifestly of God alone. In these earlier Christian writings, therefore, we were called to look rather for the moral force of truth than for any cogency of philosophical argument ; but the natural tendency of the flame of truth is, like that of physical flame, upwards ; and in the early progress of Christianity, its ascensive was no less marked than its diffusive power. With unparalleled rapidity it extended itself to the remotest nations of the earth, and through the various ranks of society ; from the tents and waggons of Nomad barbarians, even to the proud chambers of consular rank and imperial connections of Clemens and Domitilla^a. Thus the new system soon assumed a position far too prominent to be overlooked by men who prided themselves on the character of philosophical observers of the moral phænomena of society. If when,

^a Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. iii. c. 17.

a century before, Paul from the Areopagus so forcibly harangued the Stoics and Epicureans of Athens, the claims of an infant and unheard-of sect might seem feeble to arrest the notice of pride and prejudice, yet now the expanding faith, animated with a vigour of growth hitherto unknown in the history of the world, challenged the attention of these boasted schools with a force which could no longer be thus easily evaded. And we must have supposed either that none of the disciples of these various philosophical sects could have been sincere in their professed search after wisdom and truth, or that all must have been incapable of apprehending them in their highest and clearest forms, were we not prepared to find that some members at least of those schools had minds clear enough to perceive, in the doctrines of Christianity, “that first philosophy else vainly sought,” and resolution enough to avow the conviction which forced itself on their reason; and we do find accordingly, that the next Christian writers who claim our attention, were called from the schools

of an earthly to those of an heavenly philosophy, and were enabled to employ in the defence of the faith against its Gentile opponents, the resources of minds enriched by much previous literary and intellectual cultivation. Yet undoubtedly it must be allowed, (and such from the infirmity of our nature is the inseparable alloy of every human advantage,) that this introduction of secular learning was far from an unmixed benefit to the advancement of spiritual truth. The rising walls of the Christian temple were but too often daubed with untempered mortar, and the simplicity of the Gospel became at length corrupted by a false philosophy and vain deceit. A spirit of unhallowed and unauthorized speculation was too commonly fostered, seeking to be wise above that which is written ; betraying its followers into the most extravagant and fanciful reveries, and indeed ultimately merging Christianity itself into the mingled philosophical and theological mysticism of the Neo-Platonists. It must be acknowledged in justice however, that the earlier examples of the philosophical Christian

writers are comparatively free from these censures, and that for a time the wisdom of men was generally taught by them to know and respect its just relations to the wisdom of God^b, though unhappily we must still observe even in them, with much pain, some germs of the evils afterward so fearfully developed.

Justin, whose name is always coupled with the honourable addition which declares his Christian testimony even unto death^c, is well known as the earliest philo-

^b Thus it were impossible to refer to more forcible statements, or rather exhibitions, of the inadequacy of human philosophy as compared with revelation, than are contained in all the introductory portions of Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, including his narrative of his own discussion with the aged stranger, which is more particularly addressed to this point, (from beginning to p. 225.)

^c Justin certainly died, as this epithet denotes, a martyr to the faith. In his second Apology he declares that he expected this consummation from the arts and instigations of Crescens, a cynic philosopher, opposed to him in the bitterest controversy; and his pupil Tatian has informed us, that this anticipation was realized, and that his antagonist succeeded in procuring his condemnation to death in the sixth year of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. He was thus numbered together with Polycarp,

sophical advocate of Christianity. A native of Samaria, though the child of Gentile parents, he was probably early familiar with the Jewish Scriptures ; but the first devotion of his young intellect was entirely to the philosophical schools ; an initiation into which appears indeed to have been regarded as essential to the better education of that period ; and in quest of this he is recorded to have visited Alexandria, the city which, in rivalry with Athens, may be considered to have formed one of the great universities of that day ; but of the influence of this leading seminary, there will be ample occasion to speak in a future Lecture. In his *Apology*, Justin has himself given us the following statements with respect to his conversion to

and the Martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, among the Christian victims who must ever stain the memory of that self-sufficient and bigotted stoic, the affected imitator of the ceremonial piety of his boasted ancestor Numa. The acts of his martyrdom are in some respects of doubtful authority, but are quoted with confidence by Cave and Milner, as “ probably sincere transcripts of primitive records, that have for the main escaped the interpolations of later ages.” Cave’s *Life of Justin*, p. 150.

Christianity. “ I myself, while I yet delighted in the doctrines of Plato, when I beheld the Christians placed under accusation to be so fearless of death, and of whatsoever else is commonly esteemed most dreadful, I concluded in my mind that it was altogether impossible that such men should be sunk in vice and sensuality^d. ”

Another, but not inconsistent account of this his great change, is found in the commencement of his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew ; he there relates, that, after long and vain perplexities in the study of the various philosophical sects, his mind was at length opened to Christian truth, by his solemn discourse with a remarkable aged stranger^e, whom he met during his solitary rambles on the sea shores ; and he adds, that when he was thus persuaded to embrace the faith, *ταύτην μόνην εὕρισκον*

^d Apol.

^e Dial. p. 219. I am not, however, myself inclined to consider his discourse with this mysterious stranger, as intended to describe a real incident, but rather as introduced as a part of what may be called the machinery of his Dialogue more Platonic.

φιλοσοφίαν ἀσφαλῆτε καὶ σύμφορον^f. Justin, after his conversion, retained on his person his ancient philosophical vest; and his mind also still wore a clothing of the same character, which occasionally perhaps enveloped him in its folds more than might have been consistent with the vigour of his evangelical progress.

The writings unhesitatingly received by the best critics as the genuine productions of this Father^g, are entirely of an apologetical nature; consisting of two defences of the Christian cause presented to the successive emperors, Antoninus, and Aurelius, following the course of the earlier, but now lost, addresses to Hadrian by Quadratus and Aristides; and an argumentative discussion of the controversy between the Christians and Jews, embodied in the form of a dialogue, in which Justin himself and the Jew Trypho are the interlocutors. In

^f Dial. p. 335.

^g Seven articles, manifestly spurious or very doubtful, are enumerated in the first chapter of Bishop Kaye's work on this Father, which contains a full statement of his reasons for including the Exhortation to the Greeks in this list.

this, it is much more probable that the disciple of Plato imitated the form of dialogue introduced by his master, than simply recorded the report of a real discussion which had actually taken place ; to me at least, all the internal evidence afforded by the tract, appears decidedly adverse to the latter supposition^h.

In these treatises we find not only the topics employed in that age in vindication of the Christians against their fierce adversaries, but a general summary of the evidences advanced in favour of the struggling faith, and of the arguments by which its advocates endeavoured to recommend it, whether to Gentile or Jew.

^h We may compare this imitation of the Platonic dialogues with the later and very spirited imitation by Minucius Felix of those of Cicero. It consists of an argument between the Christian Octavius and the Pagan Cæcilius ; the speech of the latter presents a striking portrait of that desire to adhere to the traditions of his ancestors, on subjects in which he sceptically considered the real truth to be unattainable, so likely to have characterised the mind of a philosophical Roman in that day. It ends in the conversion of Cæcilius, supposed to have represented him who was afterwards the instrument of converting Cyprian.

Our present purpose will less require us to dwell on the topics he employs for vindication, than on those more argumentative portions, in which he exhibits his general views of Christian doctrine, and particularly of the Evangelical interpretation of the prophecies of the Old Testament. We may pass over therefore, with the briefest notice, his spirited but not disrespectful appeals to the imperial personages he addressed, whose favourite titles were the pious and the philosopher, and who courted the general fame of the guardians of justice, and lovers of truthⁱ; distinctions which they could little merit, should they persist in condemning those who bore the Christian name, on account of that name alone, and without enquiring into their guilt or innocence of the crimes alleged against

ⁱ The first Apology is addressed to Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius Philosophus, and Lucias Verus, to whose cognomina he thus alludes. Its precise date has been by different critics assigned (but on no very sufficient grounds) to various years between A. D. 130 and 150. Justin himself, speaking in round numbers, says, (c. 61.) that 150 years had now elapsed from the birth of Christ.

them^k. We need not now dwell upon his indignant refutation of those atrocious calumnies, invented by the foulest malice, and believed by the blindest prejudice, which attributed to the secret meetings of the Christians the scandal and the horror of Thyestæan banquets, and the most licentious profligacy. Nor shall we pursue his pointed retorts; how much more probable it had been to believe such reports concerning the accusers themselves, the advocates of a corrupt and demoralizing superstition; the very deities of whose worship were themselves, in their mythological history, the examples of the same and worse crimes, and whose ritual ceremonies were often of a character perfectly congenial to such tales.

In reviewing the argumentative portion of these treatises, we shall first be struck with the observation, that Justin rests his cause far less on the miracles wrought by Christ, than on the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, in him and in his ministry.

^k 1 Apol. c. 1—5. p. 53—56.

This comparative neglect of the evidence of miracles in Justin, and some of the other apologists, has been invidiously animadverted upon by the enemies of our faith¹. We may however observe, that the very earliest of those apologists, Quadratus, (whose testimony, from his more nearly coeval period with the events so attested, is of all others the most valuable,) has left us the most distinct and satisfactory recognition of those miracles. In a passage of his Apology, addressed to the emperor Adrian, which forms the only fragment of a composition (which from its date would have been so singularly interesting) preserved by the care of the historian Eusebius, we find the argument from miracles thus strongly urged; “The works of our Saviour were a lasting proof, for they were true. Such as were healed and raised from the dead by him, were not only seen to be so by the spectators at the moment of their cure and revival, but more permanently continued present among us, and remained not only during our Saviour’s

¹ Gibbon’s Remains, c. xv.

sojourn on earth, but for a sufficient time after his departure; so that some of them survived even to our own days.’’

We may, in fact, easily assign a satisfactory reason why this argument from miracles, which is to us the very keystone of our faith, (while it must always have possessed in itself the same cogency,) yet had that cogency less felt in this early age than in our own. Rightly to discriminate works above nature implies a sufficient acquaintance with the actual limits of the physical powers conceded to man, and the true character of those applications of science by which such powers might be increased: hence we may readily account for the easy credulity with which, in those days of physical and scientific ignorance, the pretensions of supernatural arts were commonly received. Thus it does not appear that the early opponents of Christianity at all questioned the truth of the wonderful works reported as having been wrought by Christ, but while they admitted this, still ascribed them to the imaginary influence of magical powers. It

is expressly on this ground, that Justin declares himself to have confined his argument principally to the evidence arising from the fulfilment of prophecy; and his having been obliged to take this view of the subject, forms in effect the strongest attestation of the reality of those miracles. His express words are the following^m. “ But least any one should thus argue against us, ‘ What hinders it but that he whom ye call Christ, being in fact a mere man, and of men, should have wrought by magical art all these miracles recorded by you,’ and therefore have been falsely regarded as the Son of God; we will therefore endeavour to construct our demonstration, not by any reliance on those who have thus reported, but rather on that more constraining evidence which necessarily commands our assent to those who have prophesied long before they came to pass, the events which we have beheld with our own eyes fulfilled and fulfilling; for this as we apprehend must prove to yourselves the greatest and most convincing demonstrationⁿ.” In his

^m p. 72.

ⁿ 1 Ap. c. 37.

prophetical argument Justin also expressly alludes to the miracles of Christ as exactly fulfilling the predictions, Is. xxxv. 5, 6.

This argument from prophecy, on which Justin so especially dwells, is moreover essentially connected with one of the most important features in the enquiry to which I would wish in these Lectures particularly to direct your attention ; namely, the degree of authority which we may feel ourselves justified in attaching to the Patristical writers, as interpreters of holy writ. In the first place, it is gratifying to be able with perfect justice to assert, that this portion of Justin's works will be found to contain a very fair collection of the principal prophetical texts which the Christian Church has in all ages held to be applicable to her divine Head. The general features of these prophetical citations he sufficiently indicates, in the summary by which he introduces them. " In these books of the prophets we find expressly predicted the advent of Christ, his incarnation and birth of a Virgin, his healing every disease and infirmity, and raising the dead, his being hated, rejected,

and crucified, his death, and resurrection, and ascension; he is also distinctly recognized as in truth the Son of God; and the mission of the Apostles to evangelize the Gentiles is foretold°. But we need not pause to remark how large a proportion of these testimonies in the Psalms and Prophets, which our blessed Lord had explained as concerning himself to his Apostles, had been previously recorded in their inspired evangelical narratives and Epistles. Justin therefore in very many of his prophetic citations necessarily coincides with this indisputable authority. Where the sure direction of these infallible guides is wanting, he will, I apprehend, be judged by common consent, to have exhibited an exact parity with any other human commentator; occasionally correct and judicious in his applications, occasionally erroneous, and sometimes extravagantly so.

Thus, in the very earliest prophecy cited in his first Apology^p, he most justly concludes, that the time predicted for the

° 1 Ap. c. 39.

^p 1 Ap. c. 40.

coming of him “for whom it is reserved^q,” had been completed before the period when he wrote, because the reduction of Judea into the form of a Roman province had then manifestly taken the sceptre from Judah; but no sound interpreter, I conceive, will be found to agree with him, when he applies also to the Messiah^r the next words of the blessing of Jacob, which seem clearly to refer to the local circumstances of the inheritance of the tribe of Judah, viz. “Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass’s colt unto the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes^s.” Here Justin considers the first clause as prophetic of our Lord’s entry into Jerusalem, riding on the ass’s colt, and the latter as

^q Genes. xlix. 10. Justin translates שִׁלּוֹחַ Shiloh, ὃ ἀπόκειται.

^r 1 Ap. c. 41.

^s Tertullian also, adv. Marcion. l. iv. c. 40. applies this passage to Christ, whom he considers as typified in Judah, “Lavabit in quot in vino stolum ejus et in sanguine uvæ amictum suum stolem et amictam cernem demonstrans, et vinum sanguinem ita et nunc sanguinem suum in vino consecrabit qui tunc vinum in sanguine figuravit.”

denoting that Christ washed with his own blood the Church of the faithful, supposed to be spiritually denominated his garment. As few, I apprehend, will concur in his interpretation, when referring to the splendid prophecy, (Is. ix. 6.) “Unto us a Child is born, &c.” he explains the clause, “the government shall be upon his shoulders,” as signifying the application of his shoulders to the cross^t. Or again, where he similarly perverts the words of the same prophet, “I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people,” to the attitude of crucifixion^u. We also find some singular misapplications of the Book of Psalms. Thus, the very plain description of the different characters and ends of the just and unjust in the first Psalm, is cited as having some not very intelligible prophetic allusion to the Messiah; and the magnificent description in the nineteenth Psalm^x of the universal attestation to creative wisdom and power, borne by the glories of the heavens, the succession of day and night, and the sun rejoicing as a

^t 1 Ap. c. 45.

^u Ibid.

C. 50.

giant in his course, is quoted as an exact prophecy of the progress of the missionaries sent forth to announce the manifestation of the Sun of righteousness. This we might well accept as a poetical illustration, but not assuredly as an express prediction.

In the ninety-sixth Psalm, Justin quotes the tenth verse^y with an addition, which there can be no doubt is a spurious interpolation, “The Lord hath reigned *from the wood*,” i. e. from the cross. Justin, in his Dialogue with Trypho, accuses the Jews of having expunged the words from their copies, but as they are absent from every MS. of the Hebrew original, and from every version, excepting only the Coptic, it is quite impossible to refer to such a cause an omission so nearly universal. In the same Dialogue he also accuses the Jews of suppressing a passage in the prophet Ezra, in which the passover was distinctly repre-

^y C. 52. the Pseudo Barnabas is supposed to have referred to this reading, (Ep. c. 8.) when he says, ὅτι ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ τῷ ξύλῳ. But there is not here any express reference to the Psalm. Tertullian thus quotes it, however, adv. Jud. c. 11. and adv. Marcion, c. 19.

sented as typical of the Messiah. But here also the critical evidence is equally and decidedly against him ; and the Jews therefore might far more justly have retorted his charge of the *suppressio veri*, by a counter accusation of the *suggestio falsi*.

In the Dialogue on the Jewish controversy, we must particularly regret to find that all Justin's defects as an interpreter are more than usually prominent. Many of the same misapplications we have before noticed, and others equally palpable here occur ; and the principle of allegorical interpretation so familiar to the Jews of the Alexandrian school, and especially to Philo Judæus, and so eagerly embraced in the forged Epistle of the Pseudo Barnabas, is here too often carried to an excess, which it were impossible to approve, and difficult to palliate. The injury which such blemishes must have occasioned to the efficacy of a treatise of this controversial description, is too obvious to require notice. The occasional intermixture of arguments involving such a complete *ignoratio elenchi*, must have contributed far less to convince the

judgment, than to excite the cavils, of that stubborn and gainsaying people ; and materially detracted from the effect, which the just and forcible reasoning, exhibited in the greater portion of this Dialogue, might otherwise have been expected to produce. But enough has been said on this painful subject ; for to every rightly feeling mind it must be painful to dwell on instances of weakness of judgment, when the faith was so sincere and the zeal so ardent as in these our first forerunners in the Christian course ; ready as they were to devote the best exertions of their lives to the advancement of the cause of truth, and to sacrifice life itself to its testimony. Nor should I have held myself justified in the preceding remarks, had I not judged it an imperative duty to point out to the younger student the necessity of due caution, before we prepare to yield an implicit submission to the guidance of such pilots in exploring the sacred Volume.

I am far more happy, however, in being able to add, that, notwithstanding these incidental examples of departure from a

sound principle of interpretation, we shall yet find Justin remarkably more free from such errors, than many of the subsequent Fathers, (those especially of the Alexandrian school,) and even than any we meet, until we arrive at the more judicious and critical age of a Basil and a Jerome. It were, indeed, most unjust, to hold out the misapplications which have been alluded to, as if they were fair average specimens of Justin's usual mode of scriptural exposition; for more commonly we may follow him with pleasure and instruction, while proceeding often in the exact steps, and very generally in the spirit, of the inspired Apostles, he satisfactorily brings forward his arguments from fulfilled prophecy, as a powerful accessory of evidence to convince the unbelieving heathen, or to remove from the Jewish mind the prejudices that rendered it so difficult to obtain their attention to many of the Christian doctrines; such as the calling of the Gentiles to the high privileges once exclusively theirs^z, and the ab-

* Dial. from p. 335 to end. This is the concluding topic of the Dialogue.

rogation of their ceremonial law, or rather its fulfilment in the establishment of those spiritual realities, of which it was but the type and shadow; the offence of a suffering and crucified, in place of a triumphant, Messiah^a, and the existence of a Trinity of Persons in the Divine essence of the one Jehovah^c. On all these points, if we read

^a Dial. p. 227—248.

^b Dial. 349 et seq. The doctrine of the two advents of the Messiah, one in humiliation, and the other in glory, form the principal topic of Justin's answer to such objections, and he returns to the explicit mention of the ideas entertained by himself and some other Christians, as to the glorious reign of the Millenium, in the restored Jerusalem, 306. He endeavours more particularly to obviate the scandal of the Cross, (310 et seq.) by shewing, that it was the subject of prophecy, and the appointed means of atonement.

* The refutation of these objections extends from p. 274 to 289. On this point Justin especially urges the expressions of those portions of the Old Testament, where the manifestations of the Divinity to the Patriarchs are ascribed to the Word or Angel of God; and he agrees with the Chaldee Paraphrasts and Philo Judæus, in considering all the patriarchal revelations to have been made through this channel, the מִימְרָא or מַלְאֲךְ יְהוָה, which terms he considers as denoting the ΛΟΓΟΣ, Christ, so that the Angel of the old and new covenant was one and the same divine Being; and to him properly belong all the ascriptions of divine titles

rather for purposes of edification than criticism, we shall find much to gratify us,

to the several manifestations recorded in the Old Testament. The reader may find all these appearances fully discussed in Allix's *Judgment of the Jewish Church*, c. 13, 14, 15. Although we cannot perhaps affirm, that this opinion is distinctly asserted in the New Testament, yet it may be said to be strongly implied in the declaration, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John i. 18.) It was unanimously entertained by the Fathers, and the Lessons appointed by our Church for Trinity Sunday sufficiently express her assent.

Such (though arranged in an extremely discursive and digressive style, and with very little of method) are the principal topics of the *Dialogue with Trypho*, each of which is so fully illustrated by the most copious references to the prophetic Scriptures, as nearly to exhaust the whole of this field. An excellent analysis of the *Dialogue* will be found in the work of Bishop Kaye on this Father; and his remarks on its character are at once just and candid. "Although I am far from wishing to deny that there are in this treatise many weak and inconclusive arguments, many trifling applications and erroneous interpretations of Scripture, many attempts to extract meanings which never entered into the mind of the sacred writer, yet I cannot think deserving of the contempt with which some later critics have spoken of it. It proves at least, that the state of the controversy was not essentially different in the days of Justin from its present state, and that after the lapse of seventeen hundred years, the difficulties to be encountered in dis-

in observing the manner in which Justin applies his stores of scriptural knowledge, to confute the gainsayer, or to confirm the hesitating.

We have thus far considered the arguments of Justin as derived from the Prophetical Scriptures of the Old Testament; his principal citations from the New are made with a view to illustrate the internal evidence of Christianity, as displayed in the superior and singular excellence of the moral precepts delivered in the Gospel. He triumphantly appeals to the power which that Gospel had so commonly exhibited, in reclaiming the profligate from his vices, and converting him to a new life of consistent purity, and general social usefulness. On this subject he thus forcibly addresses the supreme magistrate of the State^d; “ We in truth are above all other men your most valuable coadjutors and allies in preserving the peace of society.

puting with the Jews, the objections to be answered, and the prejudices to be overcome, are nearly the same.”

^d 1 Ap. c. 12.

We who firmly hold such doctrines as these ; that none, whether virtuous or vicious, can possibly escape the all-seeing eye of God ; that all are hastening to his tribunal, to receive an award of eternal bliss or woe, according to their deeds ; who," he adds, " really convinced of such truths, would ever consent to embrace the short-lived gratifications of vice, certain that the necessary consequence were to rush into the condemnation of eternal flames ?"

To support his general commendation of the morality of the Gospel, Justin adduces very copious extracts from our Saviour's discourses, especially transcribing a large portion of that from the Mount. And as we have already considered his character as an expositor of the Old Testament, we may now regard him as one of the most important early links in that chain of testimony, which has guaranteed the safe and uncorrupted delivery of the sacred records of the New, from the apostolical age to our own. He professes in his numerous citations to quote generally

the Ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν Ἀποστόλων^e; and in his interesting account of the devotional meetings of the primitive Christians on the Lord's day^f, he informs us that the first thing which took place in such assemblies, was the reading of those Apostolical Memorials, conjointly with the prophetical Scriptures; so that already the practice faithfully retained by our own Church of alternate Lessons from the Old and New Testament was fully established. Thus within half a century of their first publication we find the Gospels recognized as an essential portion of the sacred oracles, and constantly read in the Churches, in imitation apparently of the previous usage of the synagogues with reference to the earlier volume of inspiration.

I am aware, indeed, that it has been questioned, whether these Apostolical Memorials were identical with the Gospels which we receive; but when we consider that Justin's citations, as compared with the actual Gospels, always agree closely in

^e Ap. i. et passim.

^f Ap. i. c. 87. p. 98.

substance, and in words only exhibit those occasional variations which would naturally result from the common habit of quoting such familiar documents partly at least from memory, there seems very little room for any reasonable doubt, as to the absolute identity of these records. For the opposite hypothesis must involve the very improbable supposition, that a double set of documents existed not only of the same general nature, but, as far as our information goes, precisely agreeing in their particular contents; and we must further imagine that these documents were habitually and publicly read in the Christian Churches, the earlier set in the second century; while the same place was unaccountably usurped by the later set in the third century, when we are absolutely certain our own Gospels were so read. Surely then it cannot be too much to say, that this theory of the non-identity of those Gospels, and Justin's 'Memorials,' bears on its very face the plain mark of the highest improbability.

We find only a few coincidences of ex-

pression, rather than actual citations from the Apostolical Epistles, and these are generally obscure.

In proceeding to advert to the writings of Justin, as affording an evidence of the doctrines which in his early day prevailed in the Christian Church, doctrines which that Church had then imbibed so freshly from their original fountain head, we must begin by taking into our account the nature of the compositions he has left us. We must remember, that in two of these, his Apologies addressed to the Imperial government, the occasion itself naturally precluded more than very general statements on doctrinal points; and even in his discussion with the Jew Trypho, we can hardly expect the same fulness of doctrine which would characterise writings intended for internal circulation among bodies already professedly Christian, and instructed in the faith. Yet we find the doctrinal notices of Justin far more numerous and extended, than under these circumstances we should probably have anticipated; and such as, if extracted

and digested in a methodical form, would yield a body of catechetical theology very far from incomplete; and indeed infinitely more full than could be collected from all the genuine fragments of an earlier age put together. It must surely be most satisfactory to find, that the body of faith which we thus ascertain to have been embraced by the primitive Church within a century of the date of our Lord's ascension, and only half that period from the removal of the last survivors of his inspired Apostles, is in all essential points in the strictest accordance with the confession promulgated by our own Church; for the fullest satisfaction on this subject, I need only refer to the admirable collation by Bishop Kaye of the doctrinal views of this Father, with our own Articles. My own present space will allow me only cursorily to advert to the leading features.

With regard to the great fundamental doctrine of the Trinity, Justin declares that Christians generally worshipped and adored the Almighty Father, the Creator of the universe, in the first place; his only-

begotten Son, in the second; and in the third, the Holy Spirit of prophecy^ε.

The Creator and Father of all things is (he tells us) unbegotten and ineffable, Ἀγέννητος Ἀρρήτος, constantly abiding in the highest heaven, and manifesting himself to his creatures only through his Son, of whose being and divine nature he was the first source and cause, αἴτιος τε αὐτῷ τοῦ εἶναι καὶ δυνατῷ, καὶ Κυριῷ, καὶ Θεῷ^h.

His Son, the Word of God, was himself also God, Λόγος πρωτότοκος ὢν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ΘΕΟΣ ὑπάρχειⁱ.

He was originally coexistent with the Father, συνῆν τῷ Πατρὶ, from whom he was begotten or emitted, προβληθὲν γέννημα, before all created things, and through his instrumentality were all things created^j. He, as the Ἀγγελος of the Father, conducted every divine dispensation to the Patriarchs^k, having thus in all things been ever the *guide and instructor* of the human race.

^ε Apol. i. c. 16. p. 60.

^h Dial. p. 358.

ⁱ Apol. i. c. 83. p. 96. Dial. pp. 2, 67.

^j Dial. p. 285. Apol. ii. p. 44.

^k See above note on p. 141. and Dial. pp. 275, 281, &c.

At length through the will of the Father, and for the sake of that alienated race, he, through the Virgin, assumed our nature^l, yet without spot of sin^m. Having endured to suffer on the cross, he ascended into heaven, whence he shall at the last again descend to pronounce the judgment of the worldⁿ.

With regard to the Holy Spirit, Justin speaks of him as the inspirer of the Prophets^o, and the common object of divine worship with the Father and the Son^p; he also attributes actions and operations to him clearly implying personality^q. On a review of his whole statements, we must, I think, fully assent to the just and guarded conclusion of Bishop Kaye. “We cannot doubt that Justin maintained a real Trinity, but whether he would have explained it precisely according to the Athanasian scheme is not equally clear^r.”

^l Dial. pp. 286, 291.

^m Dial. pp. 330, 337.

ⁿ Apol. i. p. 88.

^o Dial. p. 341.

^p Apol. i. p. 60.

^q Dial. pp. 255, 341.

^r Some account of writings and opinions of Justin

We trace the influence of his philosophical habits of thought in the language by

Martyr, p. 73. With reference to the imputation which the Socinians have endeavoured to cast on Justin, that he himself corrupted the simplicity of the primitive Christian faith by borrowing and introducing the Platonic dogma of a Trinity, I have in another work examined as fully as I was able into these notices of a supposed Platonic Trinity; and I will only here repeat my conviction, that all who have carefully gone through such a process, must feel that Justin in truth distorted the views of Plato by an injudicious attempt to bend them into an imaginary resemblance to the truths of Christianity, from a weak desire, the better to recommend those truths to the mind of the philosophical Gentiles. Of all unfounded objections to this doctrine, none can be more so than the attempt to refer it to the dogmata of the Academy. In the same publication, I had also occasion to discuss the well-known passage of Justin, from which Priestley endeavoured to infer that a belief in the simple humanity of Christ was common among Christians in that day; whereas the words really imply the very contrary. For Justin, in his Dialogue with Trypho, where he mentions, “ some *τινὲς, οἷς οὐδ’ συντίθεμαι οὐδ’ ἂν πλεῖστοι ταῦτα μοι δοξάζοντες εἶποιεν*, to whom I myself do not assent, no, not although a majority of the same Christian sentiments with myself should thus speak.” The force of this negative conditional surely is equivalent to the assertion, that they actually were few. I need only refer the reader to Horsley’s convincing answer to Paley. The subject also has been ably noticed in Heber’s Bampton Lectures.

which he defines, and the comparison by which he illustrates, the generation of the Son from the Father; asserting this divine power to have been generated from the Father, “not by abscission or division of the paternal substance, since things which have undergone such processes are no longer the same as prior to their sections.” He employs as an illustration the new fires kindled from a former fire, which continues undiminished by the operation, and remains still the same^s.

If it be objected, that in some passages Justin appears to intimate an inferiority of the Son to the Father, as in the several instances in the Dialogue in which he asserts his appearing to the Patriarchs as the minister and messenger of the Father; the very context will sufficiently explain these, as having relation only to the office borne by Christ in the divine economy as the Mediator of every dispensation.

With respect to the doctrines of grace, as they are usually termed, we find in Justin distinct recognitions of the fall of

^s Dial. p. 358.

the whole human race through the transgression of its first parent^t, and the consequent general sinfulness of our nature^u; from this sinfulness and all its effects, Christ, he tells us, purifieth through his blood all them that believe^x. In his stripes there is healing to as many as come to the Father through him^y; for the Father of all willed that his own Christ should bear the curse^z. Faith in his blood has ever been the great source of our purification^a; all the sacrifices of the law were only the types of his one-sufficient sacrifice^b, and thus also Abraham, being yet in uncircumcision, was justified by faith.

With regard to the more intricate question, of the conciliation of the foreknowledge of God and the free will of man, we find Justin^c strongly maintaining both these doctrines. Here his views decidedly favour the Arminian, in opposition to the Calvinistic, or rather Augustinian, hypothesis, yet there is nothing in his mode of treating

^t Dial. p. 316.^u Apol. i. p. 58.^x Apol. i. p. 74.^y Dial. p. 234.^z Dial. p. 322.^a Dial. pp. 241,

319.

^b Dial. p. 259.^c Ap. i. c. 5, 8.

these difficult points which can afford just cause of offence to any candid enquirer, whatever conclusion he may himself be inclined to adopt.

Justin is led into his discussion of this subject from its connection with the argument from prophecy. “When we thus say” (he argues) “that future events are the subjects of prophecy, we are far from considering that these events happen through any fatal necessity, *εἰμαρμένη ἀνάγκη*; nor do we conceive this to be any necessary consequence of the fact, that all the actions of men must be subject to the prescience of God.” Justin strongly maintains that the freedom of *προαίρεσις* is the necessary foundation of moral responsibility, and the great distinction which raises the soul of man, as capable of voluntary and moral agency, above the vital principle of inferior animals and vegetables^d.

^d It is quite unnecessary to observe, how much in these passages we find the disciple of the Academy buckling on his old philosophical armour against the necessity of the stoics. They occur Apol. i. c. 54. p. 80. et seq.

Though these sentiments will, of course, meet with more favourable acceptance from one than the other of those parties, which in every age, since philosophical speculation was first directed to such subjects, have ever existed ; and, till in another state we finally know even as we are known, will ever continue ; still they are far too temperately stated to give offence to any ; and the age happily had not yet arrived, when the Church was to be rent by angry discussions on these abstruse points.

A still larger proportion of the Christian Church, however, may be inclined to question the soundness of Justin's judgment, when in common with one earlier* and

* This opinion had, forty years before the time of Justin, found an advocate in Papias, one of the most immediate successors of the Apostolical period, and himself, according to Irenæus, a disciple of St. John ; but Eusebius (H. E. iii. 35.) very justly remarks, that Papias himself, in a passage which he has there quoted, (and which forms the only passage preserved of his writings,) states very distinctly, that he had never enjoyed in his own person any intercourse with the Apostles, but had sought his information from others who had themselves possessed that advantage. Moreover the John, from whom he had thus at secondhand

many later Fathers^f he deduced from a literal interpretation of the Apocalyptic prophecies, and Isaiah lxxv. 17, the opinion of an actual reign of the saints and of restored Israel, for a thousand years, in an earthly and material Jerusalem. This opinion having subsequently become intermingled with much of extravagant and fanciful speculation, was ultimately rejected by the general body of the Church^g. By Justin, however,

received the tradition on which he rested his opinion of the Millenium, does not appear to have been the beloved Evangelist, but another disciple of our Lord, whom Papias distinguishes from the former as John the Elder. The tradition itself appears to have ascribed a prophecy clearly of rabbinical character concerning the extraordinary fertility of the Millennial period to our Lord himself. The whole internal evidence must induce us to coincide with the sentence of Eusebius on this matter: "that Papias, being a man of very narrow judgment, (as by his books then extant plainly appeared,) was deceived by his credulity to ascribe strange parables to our Saviour, mixed with fabulous doctrine concerning a corporeal Millenium, and was incapable of duly weighing or properly understanding the true meaning of the Prophecies in question." In the Article on Papias in the first vol. of Routh's *Rel. Sacra*, full information on this subject will be found.

^f Especially Irenæus and Tertullian.

^g Dionysius, a celebrated Bishop of Alexandria in the middle of the third century, (who, in the general

it was very temperately held, and announced by him with great moderation. In the Dialogue^b, when questioned what the opinion of Christians on this subject really was, he begins his reply with the candid admission, that many pious and pure Christians differed from his views on this point; but that he himself, and those whom he considered as most entirely correct in their opinions, *ὀρθογνώμονες κατὰ πάντα*, were per-

plague recorded by Cyprian, appears to have rivalled “Marseilles good Bishop,”) wrote a treatise “On the Promises of God,” expressly to confute these Millenarian opinions, as advocated by one Nepos, an Egyptian Bishop, apparently of pious but enthusiastic disposition; they appear then to have assumed a grossly corporeal and Judaical character. Dionysius also convened a local council on this subject at Arsænoita, and, by temperate and judicious discipline, succeeded in persuading its advocates, and especially Coracion their champion. (Euseb. H. E. vii. c. 22, 23.) Jerome stigmatizes the notion of a Millenium as a Jewish fable, and calls those who embraced it half Jews. (See Ezek. xxxvi. 38.) And Augustin (Civ. Dei, xx. 7.) condemns the interpretation of the Chiliasts. Philostorgias enumerates Millenarianism among heresies. The heresiarch Cerinthus is said to have held out to his followers a completely sensual Millenium. The Montanists also embraced this notion, and carried it to the greatest extravagance.

^b Dial. xxx. 6.

suaded that, after the first resurrection, Jerusalem should be rebuilt, enlarged, and adorned, and occupied a thousand years by the triumphant Churchⁱ.

We are also constrained to notice another weak and erroneous notion, far less defensible, because its claim to rest on an apparent though misconceived scriptural foundation is so greatly inferior; and which yet was unhappily shared by Justin, with many of the early Fathers. I allude to what may be called their strange theories of dæmonology. These theories may be thus shortly stated. The sons of God, mentioned Gen. vi. 1, were believed to have

ⁱ Having mentioned Justin's moderation and candour on this subject, I would here observe, that we have an equally gratifying example of the same qualities in respect of those who differed from his own opinions on the far more trying question concerning those Judaizing sects, who, together with the profession of Christianity, thought it incumbent to retain a strict observance of the ceremonial law. In reply to Trypho's question, with regard to the safety of those who held such sentiments, his answer is altogether tolerant; admitting them freely to retain their own views, and only requiring that they should refrain from imposing the same yoke on others, which it pleased themselves to bear.

been angels employed by God as ministerial agents in the administration of this lower world ; but who fell from their high stations, being betrayed by their passions into intercourse with the daughters of men. The offspring of this connection were dæmons, beings of a middle order, but of greatly superior power and intelligence to our own race, with which they maintained a close intercourse, and deluded the nations to ascribe to them divine honours ; thus seeking to be fed by the odours of their sacrifices. Thus these dæmons became the gods of the Gentile world. Justin supposes that they had studied the prophetic Scriptures, and, in order to divert men's minds from the reception of the truth by parallel fictions, had derived a considerable portion of the mythological fables which they spread abroad, from their views of the things foretold in the sacred prophecies, in which however they were frequently mistaken. It is quite painful to read many of the strange parallels adduced by Justin in illustration of these views^k; for the religious

^k Apol. i. p. 88—90.

mind cannot easily tolerate such an association of the truths which it is accustomed to revere as most sacred, with absurdities rejected by it with loathing and disgust.

Much as we must lament that minds of such sincere piety should have been betrayed into superstitions so injudicious, we should yet recollect, that the circumstances under which these minds were originally trained and formed will sufficiently account for, and thus far extenuate, opinions which to ourselves must appear equally extraordinary and weak. Justin, in common with his contemporaries, had his reasoning powers only recently disenthralled from the mythological fables of classical polytheism, and his studies in the academy were in this respect calculated rather to rivet more closely than to disabuse him from the superstitious notions to which I have alluded. For all who are intimately acquainted with the very mystical philosophy of Plato must well know, that most of the essential features of this theory of dæmonology are fully developed in more than one of his

Dialogues^k. Similar ideas, derived very possibly through the channel of the Alexandrian schools from this very source, had deeply infected the later Rabbinical writings of the Jews; and in the apocryphal book of Enoch^l, we find the foundation of these

^k See especially the *Timæus* (ed. Ser. t. iii. p. 41.) and the *Banquet*, (same vol. 201, 203.) We here find the whole theory of the administration of nature as committed by the supreme Deity to dæmons delegated by him, and the dependence of these dæmons for their sustenance on the sacrifices offered up, fully stated. I may refer to Note 20, to Burton's *Bampton Lectures* (p. 317.) on this subject.

^l The passage of the *Pseudo Enoch* referred to may be seen in the extract, and found in Grabe's *Spicilegium Patrum*, i. 347. These angels are called 'Εγγήγοροι, watchers, and their numbers and names are distinctly given; their offspring by their human spouses were in the first generation giants, in the second, Ναφηλαίμ, in the third, 'Ελιούδ. These watchers instructed mortals in enchantments, astrology, metallurgy, &c. Philo Judæus explains Gen. vi. 1. as usual, by wild and unintelligible allegories. The sons of God are made to typify the souls of men; and we are told that some of these heavenly emanations, instead of choosing the daughters of right reason, science, &c. became enamoured of the merely mortal race of lusts and pleasures. Josephus, and most of the Rabbis, agree with the interpretation of the *Pseudo Enoch*. The *Chaldee Paraphrast*, however, and *Aben Ezra* interpret the text more soberly, and apply it to the children of Seth, who retain the worship of God. The Fathers who followed the dæmonological opinions of

legends, in the interpretation of Gen. vi. 1, distinctly inculcated. On the whole then we ought to ascribe such superstitions far more to the genius of the age, than to the intellect of the individuals who may have entertained them; and we rejoice to find, that when Christian views had attained a larger ascendancy over the human mind, Jerome and Chrysostom, and the more judicious Fathers of the fourth century, very generally rejected these weak notions.

With equal want of judgment, perhaps, but assuredly without equal offence, Justin asserts^m, that Plato derived his views of creation from the Word speaking by the

Justin are, Clemens Alexandrinus, (Pæd. iii. 2. and Strom. iii. and vi.) Athenagoras, (Apol.) Irenæus, (iv. 70.) Tertullian, (de Virg. Vel. et de Habitu Mul.) Cyprian, (de Van. Idol.) Lactantius, (ii. 15.) and some others; but in the fourth century, the Fathers generally embraced much more judicious views. Augustin indeed, (Civ. Dei, xv. 23, 24.) merely considers the arguments on both sides, and pronounces no definite conclusion; but in his questions on Genesis, he evidently inclines to regard the sons of God as the descendants of Seth; and Jerome, Chrysostom, and many later authorities, entirely embrace this interpretation. See a learned note by Feuardentius on Irenæus iv. 70. p. 371.

^m Ap. i. 76.

Prophets, and especially by Moses, whose writings were so far anterior to all the boasted literature of Greece. Justin not only supposed Plato to have carefully studied the Mosaic writings, but also to have derived a more direct knowledge of theological truth, from the light communicated to himself by the ΛΟΓΟΣ. For under this title, as indicating the general principle of reason, (originally in every case imparted from the divinity,) Justin appears to have conceived that Christ had in every age acted on the souls of men, so that all who had ever lived *μετὰ λόγου*, were in fact, unconsciously, Christians, although they lived long before the Saviour's manifestation in the flesh ⁿ. These opinions, of which it must be quite unnecessary to point out the dangerous and latitudinarian tendency, he adduces in order to answer the objections which might otherwise be built on the late appearance of Christ to reveal the truth to men. Hence Justin supposes, that Socrates and Heraclitus derived their more correct views of the divine

ⁿ Ap. i. 61.

nature ; and were on that account persecuted through the instigation of the dæmons whose false religion was threatened by the influence of their philosophy. He therefore inclines to extend all the benefits of the Christian scheme to the true followers of right reason, and especially to those whom that reason had conducted to conceptions of the divine nature more sublime and correct than the vulgar notions. Now, although many may justly scruple to consider themselves as authorized to restrict the benefits of that only name given to men for salvation, to those alone who in this scene have been called to its knowledge ; yet few probably will consider the arguments and expressions by which Justin has endeavoured to solve this difficulty, either sound or satisfactory.

Of the soul of man, Justin speaks as deriving its immortality, not from its own essential nature, but from the good pleasure of God alone°. In the intermediate state, the souls of the good and the wicked will each (according to him) be located in their

° Dial. p. 222.

proper place, and after the judgment, the former will enjoy their perfect consummation in eternal life and bliss, and the latter be reserved in punishment so long as God shall will to continue this penal existence: His language perhaps may be thought to favour the idea, that a termination to all misery may possibly enter into the divine counsels^p: but he hazards no express assertion to this effect, and carefully guards against the consequences that would seem to hold out any encouragement to the guilty. While therefore we may hesitate to concur in sentiments on such a point, which can rest on no better basis than unauthorized speculation, we are not called upon to visit expressions so modest and cautious with any extreme harshness of critical censure^q.

^p Yet in a passage of Apol. i. p. 57. Justin appears to speak decidedly of the eternity of future punishment; *Τῶν δὲ ἀδίκων [σώματα] ἐν αἰσθήσει αἰωνία, εἰς τὸ αἰώνιον πῦρ πέμψει.*

^q It should perhaps be here mentioned, that he entertained a fanciful notion, that the souls of the faithful remained before the incarnation of our Lord subject in some degree to the power of evil spirits; of which he

In practical morals, the views of Justin, in common with those of most of the Fathers, may probably be considered as leaning to the extreme of a self-imposed asceticism; his language assuredly implies an opinion of the superior merit of celibacy, and he would clearly have favoured the exactions of the monogamists^r. Such injudicious excesses we must always deplore, and learn from them properly to estimate the great superiority of the scriptural precepts, equally holy and pure, and far more practical and prudent. But, surely, since the infirmity of human judgment is so prone to run into extremes, the extreme adopted by these pious Fathers of exaggerated restraint is at least far more safe, than that so much more common of unbridled indulgence.

In regard to the ceremonies of the Church, the often quoted sections^s towards the conclusion of the first Apology state

alleges the evocation of the spirit of Saul by the witch of Endor as an example.

^r Dial. p. 333.

^s Ap. i. c. 79. ad fin. p. 93—99.

generally, but distinctly, the simple but venerable forms which then obtained in the administration of the two Christian Sacraments. Baptism he always speaks of, not only as the sacramental sign of regeneration, but as absolutely conveying at the time all the spiritual graces and illumination which are implied in that comprehensive term; but then it must be remembered, that many of his expressions on this subject are such as will only bear on application to the case of the baptism of adult converts, having embraced the faith with full conviction of their whole souls, and thus becoming, as he says, the children of deliberate election and knowledge. I do not indeed mean to imply a doubt, that the infants of the faithful were in that age admitted to baptism^t; but under the circumstances of the time, it was natural that the baptism of adult and perfectly instructed converts should far more pro-

^t This I think may fairly be inferred, from the numerous passages in his Dialogue, in which he speaks of Baptism as having replaced Circumcision.

minently engage the mind, when that sacrament was under discussion.

The language applied to the Eucharist is such as strongly asserts the real, that is, efficacious, presence^u of the body and blood of our Lord; but cannot without force be applied to the Romanist explanation of that presence, by the hypothesis of transubstantiation. And when Justin applies the term *θυσία*^x to this sacrament, it has been justly observed, that as he expressly^y asserts prayer and praise to be alone recognized in the Christian religion as acceptable sacrifices to God, this expression should fairly be con-

^u I here as elsewhere use this expression in the sense which I believe to belong to the adverbs “verily and indeed,” as applied to the same subject by our own Church, namely, as denoting a true and efficient spiritual presence, by which all the graces obtained by the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ are actually conveyed to the souls of the faithful in this sacrament. This is quite distinct from any thing resembling the doctrine of a carnal and corporeal presence. This view of the subject is fully and explicitly set forth in the important tract of Ratram, when in the ninth century the present Romanist hypothesis made its first appearance.

^x Dial. p. 260.

^y Dial. p. 345.

considered as including these essential accompaniments.

I have thus endeavoured to give a fair and faithful view of the writings and opinions of this early Father without exaggeration or extenuation^z, and the impression on my own mind is decidedly, that while we have the greatest cause to be grateful that our faith has not been left to the guidance of writings so mingled with human error and infirmity of judgment, we have still ample reason to cherish them as a very valuable addition to our theological stores, and to treat them with unfeigned respect.

I need not now detain your attention by any particular examination of the scanty remains of Tatian, the pupil of Justin, a

^z It surely cannot be expected that I should here enter into an examination of the chronological errors attributed to him, or enter into the discussion, whether, in reporting that the Romans erected on the banks of the Tiber an altar to Simon Magus, *SIMONI DEO SANCTO*, he was or was not led into a mistake by the still extant altar to a Sabine God, *SEMONI SANCTO*. Burton, in his notes to his Bampton Lectures, defends Justin's accuracy. Neither do I feel called upon to discuss the references which Justin makes to the forged books of the Sybil and of Hystaspes.

man of ambitious and irregular mind. He was only kept steadfast in the paths of orthodoxy during the life of his preceptor, whose better influence checked his tendency to extravagance; but after his death he lapsed into the grossest heresies. His excessive austerity of disposition having always inclined him to regard matter as essentially evil, he the more easily fell into the errors of dualism like that of Marcion, representing the Creator of the material world as an evil principle; and in conformity with such views he enjoined on his followers an entire abstinence from every common use of life, as connected with the service of this author of its corporeal existence, and founded the heretical sect denominated Encratites. It is true that his address to the Greeks, his only remaining work, was composed during his earlier period of orthodoxy. But still it is excursive in style and feeble in execution; and its only value appears to consist in the light which it is sometimes calculated to throw on the sentiments of his master Justin.

But I proceed with more gratification to select, as the concluding subject of this Lecture, Athenagoras, a native of Athens, and, as his writings sufficiently attest, distinguished by a considerable proficiency of philosophical attainment. We are informed^b that he was originally opposed to Christianity, and had undertaken to write a treatise in confutation of what he regarded as a novel superstition. But he felt himself obliged for this purpose to study the writings, whose pretensions as a divine revelation he designed to expose, in order that he might proceed to his task with the advantages of accurate information; and the study so commenced in the prejudice of scornful unbelief, concluded in the conviction of a firm and humble faith. Thus did he afford a most memorable instance of

^b By Philip Sidetes, a writer of the fifth century. We know no other particulars of his private history. He is indeed said to have once presided over the Catechetical School of Alexandria; but as Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen never mention his name, as they do that of Pontæus and others connected with this institution, I am not inclined to place any reliance on this statement.

genuine conversion, effected not by the teaching of man, but by the power of the word of God. He sat down to the perusal of the Christian Scriptures the antagonist of the religion they taught; he arose its determined advocate; and his proposed refutation became exchanged for the Apology which we have now to consider. It is entitled *Πρεσβεία*, an embassy, and from that name he is supposed to have presented it as a deputy from the Christians of his own city to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and his son the degenerate Commodus^c.

In this Apology, Athenagoras employs almost exactly the same topics which we have already seen urged by Justin. Like him he claims for Christians the ordinary forms of justice, extended to every other class of the accused; like him he repels, with a natural burst of indignation, the atrocious calumnies, thrown out against the Christian assemblies; like him he appeals to the sublime doctrines of Christianity, as

^c Authorities are divided as to the exact date, varying from 166 to 178; the latter has the strongest argument in its favour.

placed in the strongest contrast to the absurd fables of heathen mythology; like him he pleads the vast superiority of the moral code of the Gospel above every other system. But on all these topics he insists, with an energy of eloquence and force of argument far superior to the former advocate; of which we are, perhaps, more sensible, from the purely Attic style in which those arguments are clothed. Many of his appeals may fairly be cited as models of this species of composition. The respectful yet manly firmness of his address to Cæsar, almost parallels that of St. Paul to Agrippa; and his exposition of the sublime conceptions of the Divine nature, so peculiar to Christianity, and yet so agreeable to the best reason of man, will bear a comparison with the harangue of that Apostle in the Areopagus. It is indeed most interesting to consider these arguments as proceeding from a native of that very intellectual city, and from a member of those very philosophical sects, to which the word of truth had for the first been addressed about a century previously, in a manner so

forcible and memorable. It is from a philosopher thus connected, that we now proceed to cite the following just and sublime views of the nature of that unknown God, whom his ancestors so ignorantly worshipped.

“ I have already sufficiently shewn,” he observes, “ how falsely the charge of atheism is imputed to us, who declare unto you the one supreme God, unbegotten, eternal, invisible, impassible ; whom no place can contain, and who can be comprehended by the faculties of the mind alone ; whose essence consists in ineffable light, and beauty, and spirit, and power ; by whom all things were made, through his word, by the which they were arranged and established. For we also intellectually apprehend the Son of God, who is the Word of the Father in idea and energy ; for by him, and through him, all things consist ; since the Father and the Son are one, so that the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, by the union and power of the Spirit^d. For we thus assert

^d I have here omitted some sentences concerning the

the existence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost ; and thus explain their unity in power, and distinction in order.”

Athenagoras has likewise left us an elaborate treatise on the resurrection ; for that preaching of Jesus and the resurrection, which once sounded so strange in the ears of his ancestors, was now received by him in all its parts. This treatise consists of two divisions ; in the former the author

eternal existence of Christ, as the *Λόγος ἐνδιάθετος* of the Father, and his procession forth for the work of creation as the archetypal idea and perfection of the universe. The whole passage is, I think, obscured by the introduction of Platonic language. This particularly affects what he says of the work of creation, in which he seems hardly to escape the great error of that and all the other philosophical schools, and expresses himself so incautiously, that he almost appears to speak of matter as if of itself pre-existent, and rather reduced into order than originally produced by the Divine energy, in a proper act of creation. In many of the statements of the philosophical Fathers concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, we assuredly often desiderate the simplicity of the Apostolical enunciation of these mysterious truths.

Justin also (Apol. i. p. 92.) speaks in unguarded and Platonic expressions of the creation of the universe, as if from pre-existent but amorphous matter, ὕλην ἀμορφοῦν οὖσαν τρέψαντα τὸν Θεὸν κόσμον ποιῆσαι.

undertakes to refute the objections which might be advanced against the resurrection of the body from the universal dissolution of every particle of the human frame in the dust of death ; from the new, combinations into which those particles constantly enter, and the circumstance that human bodies occasionally become the prey of carnivorous animals, and the like. All such objections he meets by a reference to that divine power, which can find no greater difficulty in recollecting and reconstructing, than in originally creating the substance of our frames. He also enters into some more minute arguments, which might well have been spared, as to the process by which animals partially assimilate and partially reject the particles of the substances by which they are nourished, in order to obviate the suspicion, that by any cycle of successive appropriations, the same particles could ever enter into the composition of two human bodies. But surely the more philosophical view of the whole subject is to consider, that the true personal identity of man does not

depend on the identity of the material particles of his frame, always in a flux state, and undergoing a total change in a limited number of years ; but that even in our present condition our only permanent identity is that of the one and constant indwelling Spirit, animating and occupying these variable external integuments. Still less philosophical does it seem to require the replacement of the individual particles belonging to any one of the many successive and different corporeal frames we may have possessed while on earth, in order to constitute the new body wherewith we shall be clothed when the trumpet shall have sounded, and we shall be changed ; when this natural body shall have become a spiritual body, adapted in all its parts and purposes to a mode of existence entirely distinct from any which it has before known ; when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality ; when we shall no longer bear about with us the image of the first man of the earth, earthy, but of the second

man, the Lord from heaven, being made like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. How much more sublime, and how much more consentaneous to our highest reason, is not the language of the Apostle than that of any human speculator, on this great subject; and if we consider them as philosophers only in their mode of treating it, how infinitely superior does not Paul of Tarsus appear, as compared with Athenagoras of Athens!

The second part of this treatise unfolds the positive arguments in favour of the resurrection of the body, principally founded on the consideration, that as man is a compound being consisting of body as well as soul, the restoration of his material no less than that of his spiritual portion is requisite, in order to complete the integrity of his nature; and that as all his deeds have been done not by the soul alone, but in the flesh, it were inconsistent with the equity of God's final judgment, if the award did not extend

to both the partners in the actions subjected to it^a; to the whole man, in short, raised to a new life for this very purpose.

In both these treatises of Athenagoras, if we compare them with the writings of Justin, we shall find numerous examples of a coincidence of thought so very close, and that often where the trains of reasoning are far from obvious, that it is almost impossible to resist the persuasion, that the one must have seen the writings of the other; or that both must have borrowed from the same common school of philosophizing Christians. We must regret to find in both the same extravagant dæmonological theories, the same exaggerated and monastic notions of the superior parity of a life of celibacy. Athenagoras expressly condemns every case of second marriage, though so decidedly sanctioned by St. Paul, as no better than a specious adultery, *εὐπρεπὴς μοιχεία*.

In Athenagoras we find no explicit statements bearing on the atonement, or the

^a Yet surely we cannot speak of matter as the subject of any moral reward.

doctrines of grace ; but we need not surely ascribe this to any deficiency in his own views on these all-important subjects, when we remember that he was not addressing an epistle of edification to those who admitted the doctrines of Christianity, but a vindication to the imperial government of their heathen persecutors. In this he very naturally insists rather on the excellence of their morality as an exoteric topic, than on any esoteric doctrines of the faith ; and this argument he forcibly presses, by inviting (as Justin had done before) attention to our blessed Saviour's unrivalled precepts of meekness, charity, holiness, and purity. This topic he thus impressively winds up, " Which of the philosophers, engaged in all the subtleties of logical research, have ever inculcated precepts such as these ? With them indeed their profession is a mere rhetorical flourish, not a rule of life ; but among us you may find common artisans, the poor, the illiterate, and the aged ; these, although they may not eloquently declaim on the excellence of their profession, display it in their practice ;

they do not seek to store their memory with empty words, but to manifest by their virtuous conduct the principles they cherish.”

In this author we meet with no allusions to the discipline or rites of the Church.

Passages occur in his writings from each of the four Gospels, and we find many coincidences with the Apostolical Epistles, but only one express reference. (1 Cor. xv.)

In the hasty survey I have taken of these Fathers, I especially trust, that both my opinions and language have been preserved from the slightest tendency to disrespectful feelings towards the time-honoured names of these our ancestors in the faith. I have indeed felt it my imperative duty explicitly to state the grounds on which I would suggest to the younger theological student the necessity of due caution, before he proposes to surrender his judgment, with a blind and implicit submission, to authorities which, being merely human, must of necessity be fallible; deeply convinced, that thus to exchange the pure well of Scripture undefiled, for streams tinged by the infusions

of mere earthly channels, were to inflict a grievous injury on the sound cause of Christian truth. But little less injurious should I esteem it, to flatter the false pretensions to enlarged views, of an age too often bordering on the semi-sceptical, by assuming a tone of scornful depreciation, where dispositions of affectionate respect, though not superstitious veneration, must be so much more congenial to every breast that feels rightly: and greatly should I fear lest any random shafts, rashly aimed against these Fathers in the faith, should chance to lodge in the vitals of the faith itself. We have not indeed attempted to conceal that they had their weaknesses, and even errors; but we are surely bound to take into our candid consideration the degree in which these defects were the natural results of the circumstances under which they were placed. They were indeed the honoured instruments through which have been transmitted to us the inestimable treasure of Christianity. But the voice of inspiration itself has warned us, that this treasure was necessarily con-

veyed in earthen vessels. Now it is the common accident of such vessels, that they may impart to that which they convey some slight extraneous flavour, derived from the infusion they may have originally imbibed ; and the remark on the retentive conservation of such original infusions, is trite to a proverb. We should remember, therefore, that these primitive converts had been originally trained in a moral and intellectual state of society of a far different character from that which has been gradually developed by centuries of what may be called the educational process effected by long-established Christianity. It cannot therefore be surprising, that minds, having imbibed their first ideas of religion from the altars of them that were no gods, and of reason from the schools of sophists rather than philosophers, should occasionally exhibit views less exalted, less refined, and less judicious, than ought to be familiar to generations which have drawn in their first breath in an atmosphere long pervaded by the ethereal spirit of Christianity, and have, it may be unconsciously to them-

selves, drank in some infusion of these purifying principles almost with their mother's milk. If then we make in behalf of these early Christians this allowance for some slight remaining tinge of the superstitions familiar to their infancy, and the empty philosophy in which their youth had been trained, what more of error can be imputed to them that is not altogether innocent in its source, and comparatively harmless in its effects? What if any of these Fathers, having Christ in their hearts when they searched the Scriptures which they valued chiefly as testifying of him, imagined that they could detect such a latent testimony in texts, which to a more correct judgment may appear little capable of such an application:—what if, glorying like St. Paul only in his cross, they fancied they discerned in many of the objects of nature and art most foreign to such relations the types of that image so deeply impressed on their own breasts:—yet surely an excess of this kind is far less faulty in its principle, and far less fatal in its results, than that dry, hard, and cold spirit, so

much more common, which cares for none of these things, and which is secured from all such errors of a warm and enthusiastic imagination less by the force of reason than by the calmness of indifference. I should therefore esteem myself ill to have discharged an office which brings me necessarily into contact with so many young and enquiring minds, were not the sentiments I should anxiously wish to leave impressed on them, after such a discussion, sentiments which should fix their regards on the vast improvements effected by Christianity from its first appearance, rather than on the slight blemishes which may still have adhered to intellects but recently opened to its purifying influence; sentiments which should teach them to love and honour all who from the beginning have loved and honoured our common Saviour.

LECTURE IV.

1 THESS. v. 21.

Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.

THE unity and natural connection of our subject will be far better preserved, by considering the early ecclesiastical writers as arranged under the very strongly marked classes to which their characteristic features obviously refer them, rather than by pursuing an exact chronological order. Our last Lecture was devoted to the earliest specimens of the philosophical class of Fathers; and I now therefore propose to proceed to their successors of the Alexandrian school, before I enter on the consideration of Irenæus and Tertullian, the more dogmatical opponents of the early heretics.

The writers, who will thus demand our present notice, were so closely connected with the schools of Alexandria, and owed so much of their distinctive character to that connection, that we shall scarcely

form a right apprehension of their true position, without first bestowing a few moments' attention on the circumstances of the local institutions under which they were formed. That mighty emporium of the traffic of the ancient world, by its flourishing prospects from its very foundation, gave the proudest attestation to the profound political sagacity of the distinguished conqueror whose name it bore. Starting at once into the general central depot of the commerce of nations, it speedily became by a natural consequence the centre also of their science and learning, for these have ever been found to follow in the train of commerce. The philosophical schools of Athens were soon transplanted, and flourished on the banks of Nile, with greater vigour than even on those of Ilissus; and it was here that the science of Greece most nearly rivalled that which forms the pride of modern Europe. It was here also that the philosophy of that intellectual people first came into contact with the theology derived from a higher and purer source. The Jews of the dispersion were then, as

now, scattered widely abroad ; and the active habits of commerce, which already distinguished them, drew them in crowds to this great mart, the principal resort of the nations, peoples, and languages. Under these circumstances, the Jews were led into a far more extended intercourse and closer intimacy with the Gentiles than elsewhere ; and thus became known by that new name which well distinguished their blended character, the Hellenists. For the Greek became to them a tongue more familiar than their native Hebrew ; their sacred books were studied rather in the Septuagint translation than the original ; and all their habits of thought became proportionally changed.

While in this intercourse they seem to have persuaded many of the heathens of the infinite superiority of the sublime views of the divine nature presented by their own Scriptures over the absurd mythology of polytheism ; they themselves also in return received a tinge from the philosophical schools which flourished around them, especially from those of the Platonic

sect. This, as has been well observed, may be traced even in some passages of the apocryphal books appended to our Bibles, *e. g.* Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus; but it is more especially obvious in the writings of Philo Judæus, (who flourished in the time of Claudius.) The purer faith became thus blended with many extravagant metaphysical and psychological speculations, and above all a most unwarrantable system of scriptural interpretation was very commonly introduced, according to which the simple and literal meaning was, if not plainly denied, yet kept studiously in the back ground, and the wildest license of the most strained allegorical interpretation substituted in its place. Such were the circumstances of the Jewish schools of Alexandria, when the Gospel was first preached there, according to the most general tradition, by the Evangelist Mark, about A. D. 60.

The new faith must have found a protection, to which it was generally a stranger, in the circumstances of a city whose essentially cosmopolitan character rendered the fullest

toleration indispensable to its political interests. Here, as elsewhere, the Gospel was first preached to the house of Israel in the synagogue, and thence must probably have drawn the larger and more influential portion of its earlier converts. Those whose bigotted attachment to Jewish forms had been already somewhat modified by the influence of philosophical views, would probably have been in many instances the most readily induced to embrace the new faith^a, and such converts must have brought over

• It has been supposed by Eusebius, that the ascetic sect of Therapeutæ, very numerous in this district in the reign of Claudius, were Christian converts. Philo Judæus has left us a full account of their institutions in his tract, *Περὶ Βιοῦ Θεωρητικοῦ*. They assumed a regular monastic organization, and subjected themselves to the rules of a moral discipline, pure indeed, but exaggerated to the most extravagant excess of austerity; and as we are told (Phil. Jud. 691.) that they were in the habit of studying the Jewish Prophets and Psalms, which they interpreted allegorically, it is clear they must have been Hellenistic Jews. As to the hypothesis that they were Christians, it rather appears that they had existed long previously to the first promulgation of that faith. It is however exceedingly probable, that many of these enthusiastic aspirants after moral purity, may gladly have received that pure religion.

with them their previous philosophical tastes, and their consequent fondness for allegorical exposition ; their religion would therefore now become in too many instances a sort of hybrid between Christianity and Platonism, as it had before between the same school and Judaism. In its extreme case this was the rank source whence issued the numerous spawn of Gnostic heresies.

So widely spread were the Hellenistic views diffused from this centre, that we may probably in part attribute to their influence the philosophical character of the writers we considered in the former Lecture. Justin we know had visited Alexandria, and Athenagoras is even said, though on very doubtful authority^b, to have presided in its catechetical schools.

At least, as early as the reign of Commodus, a very flourishing catechetical school

^b Philip Sidetes tells us, that he was the instructor of Clemens Alexandrinus ; but this seems contradictory to the account of Eusebius, who tells us that Pantænus was the master of this Father. Philip's own authority has ever been reckoned low, and is here supported by no other evidence.

of the Christians was here established. Eusebius informs us, that Pantænus, originally a stoical philosopher, whom he describes as illustrious for his learning, at that time presided over it, and became the instructor of his far more distinguished pupil Clemens Alexandrinus, who succeeded him in its government^c, within the first twenty years of the third century. We may now proceed to consider the writings of this Father.

As literary curiosities, these writings undoubtedly possess the very highest interest; and they also contain much matter well entitled to higher and more Christian praise; many powerful statements of the converting truths of the Gospel, and affecting exhortations to receive those truths in their full powers, and to find in them holiness and salvation. But these sounder portions are too commonly alloyed with, and even corrupted by, an incongruous mixture

^c Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. l. vi. c. 6. Pantænus afterwards became a Missionary in India; but it is uncertain whether India proper, or a nearer district sometimes called by the same name, were the scene of his evangelical efforts.

of extraneous and irrelevant matter ; fragments of multifarious literature, and crude speculations of a diseased philosophy.

The principal extant works^d of Clemens consist of three consecutive compositions, intended for the use of persons considered in three different stages of progress, with regard to the Christian life.

1. Enquirers not yet decided converts.

^d In one of his works which is now lost, entitled Hypotyposes, Photius informs us, that many most heretical opinions had become intermingled ; but it is fair to add, that his expressions imply that these may possibly have been interpolated by some other hand. “ Καὶ ἀλλὰ μύρια βλασφημεῖ καὶ φλυαρεῖ· εἴτε αὐτὸς εἴτε τὶς ἕτερος τὸ αὐτοῦ προσώπον ὑποκρίθεις. The specimens he mentions are many of them decidedly of a Gnostical tendency. He particularly cites assertions of the eternity of matter ; of the non-eternity of the second Person of the Trinity ; that the true Word was never actually incarnate ; but that an inferior word or secondary emanation from the former, being itself also a spiritual intelligence, pervaded a human soul, and thus became manifest to man. In the remains, however, still preserved, we assuredly find nothing thus opposed to sound doctrine ; though even in these, we are often obliged to acquiesce in another sentence of the judgment pronounced by the learned Bishop on the Alexandrian Catechist. “ Ἐν τισὶ μὲν ὀρθῶς δοκεῖ λέγειν ἔν τισι δὲ παντελῶς εἰς ἀσεβεῖς καὶ μυθώδεις λόγους ἐκφέρεται.

2. Catechumens, or the young in the faith, requiring progressive instruction.

3. Confirmed, advanced, and, as it were, adult Christians.

It is somewhat singular, that, in our examination of these works, we shall find comparatively little that will strike us as objectionable in the earliest and most elementary; and that our favourable opinion will probably decline in exact proportion with our advance to those professing a higher character.

The first of these is the *λόγος προτρεπτικὸς*, or, as the author's conception of the force of this title might be best expressed, Call to conversion, addressed to the Gentiles. It is written in a style of earnest and glowing eloquence, occasionally, perhaps, defective in taste, too declamatory and diffuse, abounding in repetition, and altogether having rather the character of an extemporaneous harangue, than a studied written composition; but the religious mind will, I conceive, esteem these defects to be more than compensated, by the warmth of piety and depth of feeling with

which the author in so many places endeavours to inculcate the spiritual application of the principles of Christianity, and to impress on the souls of those he addresses, the converting and sanctifying influences of that holy faith.

Having in the beginning contrasted the power of Christ with their own mythical fables of Orpheus and Eunomus, he thus applies the subject, “ My Eunomus indeed singeth a new song *Νηπενθὲς ἀχολόντε κακῶν ἐπιλήθεις ἅπαντων*, he moveth not the stones of the earth and the beasts of the forest, but the stony hearts and brutal passions of men; for ‘ we ourselves also,’ as the apostolic Scripturesaith, (Tit. iii. 3.) ‘ weresometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another; but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his own mercy he saved us.’ Behold then this new song what power it hath; from stones, from brutes, it hath transformed us into men;

and those who else were dead, and destitute of any real vital principle, if once they listen to this strain, rise to a new life.” In a similar style he proceeds endeavouring to win their love to the Gospel by warm representations of this eternal love which had induced the Divine Word to assume our suffering nature, and by his earthly ministry to open the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf; to guide our feet in the paths of righteousness; to free us from sin and death and hell, by imparting new powers of leading heavenly lives on earth, and opening to us the prospect of an heavenly inheritance hereafter; for thus did God become like unto man, that he might instruct man to become like unto God^e.

We need not dwell on the pointed manner in which in the body of this treatise he exposes the gross abominations and

* These passages are extracted from c. i. they are of necessity very materially condensed; it was my object rather to give the essential spirit, than an exact transcript, of the original; to have aimed at more, would have been incompatible with the necessary restrictions of compositions like these Lectures.

absurdities of the vulgar system of idolatrous Polytheism^f; nor follow him where he insists how uniformly the purer views of a more intellectual philosophy, and even the sublimer passages of their poetry, had ever tended to the inculcation of one supreme God^g. But I would particularly recommend to your perusal and study, the forcible and truly Christian exhortations to spiritual conversion which are dispersed through the four last chapters^h. My present space will only allow me to select and condense a very few passages, exhibiting their general spirit. “ Thus saith the Holy Spirit, the mouth of the Lord, ‘ Despise not, my son, the discipline of the Lord ;’ observe, he speaketh not as a master to his servants, he speaketh

^f We may be forcibly reminded of the Suniassee devotees of India in the following paragraph ; idolatry has ever been the same. Ἰδετω τις ὑμῶν τοὺς παρὰ τοῖς εἰδωλοῖς λατρεύοντας κόμη ῥυπῶντας ἐσθῆτι πιναρᾷ καὶ κατεῤῥήγυία, καθυβρισμένους, λουτρῶν μὲν πανταπάσιν ἀπειράτους, ταῖς δὲ τῶν ὀνύχων ἀκμαῖς ἐκτεθηριωμένους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τῶν αἰδοίων ἀφηρεημένους, ἔργω δεικνύντας τῶν εἰδωλων τὰ τεμένη, τάφους τινὰς ἢ δεσμωτήρια.

^g This is illustrated by a variety of quotations both from the extant and lost poetical works.

^h Page 68, et seq.

not as God to man, but as a father admonishing his dear children. ‘Come, oh come then as his children; for remember, that unless ye become children by a new birth, the Scripture plainly testifieth that ye shall never be able to recover your true Father, nor to enter his heavenly kingdom, for that is inaccessible to the stranger and the alien; and he alone who is enrolled and made free of that city, and hath regained his heavenly Father, shall there dwell in that Father’s house, receive his inheritance, and enjoy communion with his true and beloved Son. Such is the Church of the first-begotten written in the heavens, and rejoicing around the divine throne with myriads of angels. Does God freely offer so great salvation, and will you still blindly persist to rush into destruction? Yet does not that merciful God lay aside his care; he is still urgent, encouraging, alarming, awakening, converting. ‘Awake,’ saith he, ‘thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts;’ and this to-day shall last till

that phrase can be used no more. For the day of instruction shall endure until the consummation of time itself; until the real, the unfading day of God shall be coextended through eternity. Oh, if an entrance into that blessed eternity could be purchased, were not the whole of Pactolus too small a price? yet to you it is freely offered, and requires but the treasure of a living faith and love placed in your own possession. Yet how many cling to this world as the seaweed to the rocks of the shore, and regard not this glorious immortality; but true religion can be learned effectually from God alone; he is the only perfect teacher; he alone has power to renew in man the likeness of his own image. His inspired word alone, as St. Paul reminds Timothy, ‘can make wise unto salvation through faith in Christ.’ These are justly called the Holy Scriptures, for they can indeed impart an holy and divine nature, being, as the Apostle well adds, ‘profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished to every good work;’

every other species of exhortation must ever fail to move the heart of man, as the word of God, his truest friend, has power to move it^b.”

How strongly is not the justice of this

^b Extracted and condensed from c. ix. p. 68, et seq. There is an excellent analysis, or rather abridgment, of the λόγος προτρεπτικὸς in Bishop Kaye's account of this Father, but I did not consult this volume till after I had written the above; and I find that while we agree in our general estimate, the particular passages I have selected and extracted are generally different from those on which he has dwelt. This may enable those, who may honour my Lectures by comparing them with this very superior Dissertation, to form a more complete idea of this treatise of Clement's, than if we had both produced the same extracts. Bishop Kaye has some admirable remarks on the general object of this work. “The professed aim of Gentile philosophy was to accomplish the amelioration of human nature; to render man superior both to external circumstances, and to his own appetites and passions, by placing before him a model of perfect virtue, of which he was never to lose sight, and to which he was to conform his whole life and conversation. The philosopher failed to effect his object, because he was alike ignorant of the true source of moral obligation, and of the true standard of moral excellence; and because he could supply no adequate sanctions to ensure obedience to his injunctions. The main design of the hortatory address is to shew, that the Gospel possessed the requisites in which philosophy was deficient.

last remark brought home to our conviction in studying the writings of the present author, when we thus find that they derive all that is truly valuable in them, all their force and efficacy in winning and converting the souls of men, to such faithful applications as we have just examined, of the very words and spirit of the living oracles of God ! How much must we not regret, that the mind capable of so deeply apprehending, and so earnestly expressing, such high truths, should ever have quitted the secure guidance of Scriptural instruction, and gone so widely astray, wandering after its own inventions !

The second of Clement's three treatises purports to be dedicated to the moral training of what he esteemed the season of adolescence in the Christian life ; as his former work had relation to its infancy in conversion. It is therefore entitled the *παιδαγωγὸς*, the guide of youth ; for I must here again paraphrase rather than translate the title of the work, since the familiar version would convey but an inadequate idea of the significance of the original term as employed by Clement. In pursuing this plan, he tells

us he imitated the successive steps adopted by our Lord himself in conducting the economy of his grace, Προτρέπων ἀνωθὲν, ἔπειτα παιδαγωγῶν, ἐπὶ πάσιν ἐκδιδάσκων.

The business of this second Christian stage, he informs us, must always require, as a necessary preliminary to the successful inculcation of the precepts of future holiness, the antecedent remedial process of his grace, “ who forgiveth all our sins, and healeth all our infirmities.” The true Παιδαγωγὸς is therefore required to cure before he can instruct the young of his flock ; and Christ alone is sufficient for this great work ; he who is God in the form of man ; he who though man is yet without spot of sin ; he who could say to the paralytic, “ Arise, take up thy bed, and walk,” and to Lazarus, “ Come forth from the grave !” he alone has power to say to a single sinner, “ Thy sins are forgiven thee.” All his attributes combine for our encouragement and aid ; as God he pardons our transgressions, as man he instructs us to righteousness. Thus are we indeed enabled to confide in the love of God ; for not only

are we the creatures of his hand, into whom he hath breathed a principle from himself; but we have a far higher proof of God's love, in that for us the only-begotten Son was sent forth from his Father's bosom.

Clement then proceeds to observe, that Christ, as the universal *Παιδαγωγός*, is equally the instructor of every class, of either sex, of the learned and the ignorant; all alike stand in need of his instruction, being all in one sense childrenⁱ. Yet let none esteem the doctrines of Christianity as puerile, or Christians as childish in intelligence. No; far from such degrading views, the quality of children of God, which Christians receive in their baptism^k, renders

ⁱ These remarks are principally directed against the Gnostics, who stigmatized ordinary Christians as mere children when compared with themselves, who alone had attained the perfect growth of men in knowledge, while the rest were fed only with milk fit for babes. They perverted 1 Cor. xiii. 11, and 1 Cor. iii. 2, to the support of these arrogant pretensions.

^k Bishop Kaye, in reporting the further views concerning Baptism which Clement here introduces, justly observes, "That the perfection of which he here speaks as conferred by that sacrament is not so much actual as prospective; the commencement of that which is to

them perfect in the knowledge of divine truth, delivering them from their sins by grace, and enlightening them by the illumination of faith. Thus are Christians at once both children and men; and the pure milk wherewith they are fed, being the word and the will of God, is the most sustaining and invigorating of all nourishment¹. Clement then^m proceeds to prove,

be hereafter accomplished, in which God may be said to anticipate the future, by the power of his will to establish the grace which that will confers. Clement proceeds to illustrate the subject, by comparing the state of a baptized person to that of one who has been couched for a cataract; so in Baptism, the sins which obscured the eye of the soul being removed, the spiritual vision becomes free and unobstructed, and open to the heavenly rays of the Holy Spirit. He may not perhaps have received the perfect gift reserved for the resurrection of believers; but he has passed the necessary introduction, he has passed from darkness into light, (for between these there is no intermediate step,) and the darkness no longer comprehends him." Account of Clement, &c. p. 52.

¹ Here Clement expatiates at length, and in a manner sufficiently fanciful, on this figure. He here also introduces the sacramental food of the Christian, the Lord's body and blood. As the introductory topic of discussion is purely figurative, every principle of parity of reasoning must lead us to conclude, that he considered the terms employed in the latter case as figurative also.

^m Cap. vii.

that he who is our present instructor, even Christ, hath acted in the same relation to the Church in every preceding dispensation. It was he who of old guided Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and led his chosen people, in all their weary pilgrimage, through the wilderness.

The modesⁿ by which the great instructor disciplines his children are next considered ; he constantly watches and presides over them by the rod of discipline, government, and power. Do any murmur against this rod of discipline ? Do any regard the threat and the terror, as calling in question the divine goodness ? These are in truth the best proofs of his tender and solicitous care ; every correction he inflicts is remedial in its design, and salutary in its end ; he does but correct us for our good, that we may become partakers of his righteousness, and be preserved in safety to eternal life and happiness. But while we recognize the necessity of these sharp remedies to awaken repentance and to restrain sin, how much more delightful

ⁿ Cap. viii.

is it, not to reflect on those encouraging texts, which represent our divine Instructor as all gentleness and kindness ; as when he pronounced the general and gracious invitation, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

Such is the substance of the first book of the παιδαγωγὸς, exhibiting the general character of Christ in the various offices of this relation, as the guide, guardian, and instructor of his children °. In its general spirit, as I trust the above condensed synopsis will have sufficiently shewn, it is rich in truly Christian sentiment ; although we may regret, that the excessive amplification and expansion of the original too often attenuates its force, and occasionally the images presented by the familiar circumstances of this relation of παιδαγωγὸς are

° A single sentence of the original may be quoted, as presenting in itself a summary of the great subject of this book. Εἰκότως ἄρα Σωτῆρος μὲν οἱ νοσοῦντες δεόμεθα. οἱ πεπλανημένοι δὲ τοῦ καθηγησαμένου· καὶ οἱ τυφλοὶ τοῦ φωταγωγήσοντος· καὶ οἱ διψῶντες τῆς πηγῆς τῆς ζωτικῆς ἀφ' ἧς οἱ μεταλαμβάνοντες, οὐκέτι διψήσουσι· καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ δὲ τῆς ζωῆς ἐνδεεῖς· καὶ τοῦ ποιμένου τὰ πρόβατα· καὶ οἱ παῖδες τοῦ παιδαγωγοῦ. p. 147.

pursued in a manner calculated to bring low and ludicrous ideas into association with the holiest name.

The two remaining books are occupied with the detail of the particular precepts judged most necessary in this stage of the Christian progress; and these altogether relate to the inculcation of the virtues of temperance, sobriety, chastity, and frugal modesty; and the reprobation of the opposite vices of luxury in meals, in apparel, in baths, and the like indulgences. He enters into the minutiae of these subjects with much of the spirit and temper, and sometimes even with the coarseness, of a keen satirist^p. We must respect the high general tone of his Christian morality, although we must regret that in particular instances offence is sought out with a morbid scupulosity; and Christian purity occasionally becomes exaggerated into puritanical austerity; while at other

^p These portions of the work preserve many extremely curious illustrations of ancient manners, for he does not consider even the details of a lady's toilette beneath his notice.

times he is animated by a more judicious spirit, and ably argues against the extravagant excesses of the encratites in this respect¹.

The third treatise, which Clement considers as addressed to more advanced Christians, is of a strangely miscellaneous character; he calls it on this account *Στρωματεῖς*, or carpet work, because it may well seem a texture of complicated embroidery.

¹ One of these sections relates to the practice of wearing of chaplets of flowers on the head, which is strongly condemned in Christians; the arguments are identical with those employed by Tertullian in his tract *De Coronâ Mil.* the fifth and seventh sections of the second book will probably most astonish the reader, as occurring in a serious work. We are assuredly too often reminded in these books of the spirit of our own Prynne. Bishop Kaye has some most judicious reflections on these books: "We have only to compare Clement with St. Paul, in order to be convinced of the superiority of that mode of moral instruction, which lays down general principles, and leaves them to be applied by the discretion and conscience of each individual according to his particular circumstances, to that which professes to regulate every single action, and by its minuteness becomes at once burthensome and ridiculous." *Account of Clement, &c.* p. 71.

In this singular and rambling work we find interwoven, without any regular method, discussions on the use and importance of philosophy, and its relations to revelation ; on the faith, love, hope, and fear of the Christian, of whom, under what he conceives his most perfect form, he introduces a very extravagant portraiture, designating him the true Gnostic. He proceeds to the topics of marriage, of martyrdom, of heresy, and of the Catholic faith ; he subjoins his own views on the correct exposition of the Scriptures ; and we find appended to the whole a completely irrelevant treatise on logical principles. As to any merit of Christian edification, this is as far inferior to a great part of his former treatises, as it may perhaps be considered superior to them in matters of merely literary interest and curiosity. But it is the part of the secular critic, and not assuredly of the theologian, to institute a parallel between this work, and the *Deipnosophist*, of his compatriot and cotemporary Athenæus. It must be my task to confine myself to matters of purely theo-

logical investigation, and in this light I cannot scruple to confess, that if such were the food given to the more perfectly initiated in the Alexandrian schools, it had been far preferable to have remained in the inferior classes of the catechumens and most recent converts.

In order to form a correct estimate of the tendencies of this work, we must commence by considering the nature of that philosophical medium, which throughout these pages colours, and often altogether overclouds, the author's views of Christian truth. He had embraced with all the devotion of his enthusiastic temperament the tenets of the new eclectic sects^r, which (founded chiefly on the school of Plato) borrowed also from other sects sundry fanciful speculations in metaphysics and theology, and incorporated them into a composite system, of which the prevailing character was derived from an harmonizing tint of mysticism spread over the

^r Στρω. i. 7. Φιλοσοφίαν δὲ οὐ τὴν Στωικὴν λέγω, οὐδὲ τὴν Πλατωνικὴν ἢ τὴν Ἀριστοτελικὴν, ἀλλ' ὅσα εἴρηται παρ' ἑκάστη τῶν αἱρέσεων τούτων καλῶς.

whole. In the very first chapter Clement professes in express words, that it was not his intention to deliver the doctrines of Christian truth pure and unmixed, but shrouded, or indeed rather concealed, by these philosophical dogmata, as the esculent kernel of the nut lies hidden within its shell. Firmly convinced of the utility and substantial truth of this philosophical system, he argues, that it is absurd not to consider it as having originally descended to the race of man from Him who is the Author of all good, and the Father of all lights ; he therefore considers Christianity rather as the perfection of this system, than a principle essentially distinct either in its nature or its origin ; but he admits that this Gentile philosophy was both in itself imperfect, and that the adversary had sown the tares of Epicurus among the good wheat of the academy ; and therefore it required to be purged, improved, and cultivated to an higher perfection by such a special revelation as had been finally made by the Eternal Word. Now while we admit with the apostle, that God had never left him-

self without witness in the hearts of men ;— that the evidences of natural theology exhibited in his works, and the intellectual powers which qualify us to apprehend those evidences, and deduce their conclusions, were undoubtedly designed by him to enable all nations, whom he made of one blood on the face of the earth, to seek after him, if haply they might find him, and thus fulfil the great end of their being ;—yet I fear we must confess, that the views of Clement are carried very far beyond these rational and sober limits, and calculated to lead, as they did in the hands of his successors in the Alexandrian school, first to the complete corruption, and afterwards to the final renunciation, of Christianity ; and the substitution (under the apostate Ammonius Saccas) of the most truly latitudinarian system of combined universalism in philosophy and religion ; in which a fusion of every existing and almost every possible sect and creed was attempted on the principle, that all philosophers inculcated one general system of truth, though under different forms and modes of expres-

sion; and that all systems of religion, whether recognizing Jehovah, Jove, or Lord, were but different manifestations of one and the same source of all divine power, accommodating its various communications to man, to the circumstances of different nations, and stages of society. Although Clement himself carefully recognizes the infinite superiority of the true philosophy of Christianity over every other, still we cannot acquit him of having opened a wide door for the admission of these subsequent excesses; for he himself very commonly uses language which appears to describe the Gentile philosophy as a direct revelation from heaven, given to the Greeks as a peculiar domestic covenant, (*οἰκεία διαθήκη*,) by which they were to be justified, even as the law was given for the justification of the Jew^s. He seems almost

* Στρω. i. 2. Φιλοσοφίαν, ἀληθείας οὐσαν εἰκόνα ἐναργῆ, θεῖαν δωρεὰν Ἑλλησι δεδομένην. i. 5. Ἦν μὲν οὖν πρὸ τῆς τοῦ Κυρίου παρουσίας εἰς δικαιοσύνην Ἑλλησιν ἀναγκαία φιλοσοφία. vi. 8. Τὴν δὲ φιλοσοφίαν καὶ μᾶλλον Ἑλλησιν οἷον ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗΝ ΟΙΚΕΙΑΝ αὐτοῖς δεδόσθαι, ὑπόβαθρον οὐσαν τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφίας. vi. 17. Εἰκότως οὖν Ἰουδαίους μὲν Νόμος Ἑλλησι δὲ φιλοσοφία μέχρι τῆς παρουσίας [τοῦ Χριστοῦ] ἐντεῦθεν δὲ ἡ κλήσις ἡ καθολικὴ εἰς περιούσιον τῆς δικαιοσύνης

to consider both these as preliminary dispensations, standing very nearly on a footing of parity, both having been originally imperfect and subsequently corrupted, and both therefore equally abrogated as obsolete, in order to make room for the more

λαὸν κατὰ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως διδασκαλίαν. It were abundantly easy to multiply similar quotations, (for whole chapters to this purpose might be transcribed,) but the above specimens must be quite sufficient. The more orthodox (ὀρθόδοξοι, as Clement calls them, i. 9.) appear to have been shocked at these notions, and running into an opposite extreme, entirely repudiated human philosophy, (i. 1.) and attributed its invention to the Devil. (i. 11.) Clement himself does not appear very clear how philosophy was communicated from heaven to earth, whether directly from the Deity, or indirectly by a Promethean theft through the lapsed angels. (v. p. 650.) In concluding this note I ought to state, that in the twentieth chapter of the first book, the great superiority of Christianity is distinctly acknowledged. Μόνη δὲ ἡ κυρία αὕτη ἀληθεία ἦν παρὰ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ παιδευόμεθα. He warmly denies that he had ever appealed to philosophy as a principal cause of our knowledge; for he maintains, he had ever represented it only as subordinate and subsidiary; and admits that many, uninstructed in this philosophical and encyclopedical learning of the Greeks, yet having through faith received the divine Revelation, in the power of God became fully instructed by a self-efficient Wisdom (αὐτουργῶν Σοφία).

universal and perfect calling of both Jew and Gentile by the Gospel, to form henceforth one peculiar people by the instruction of faith.

Surely we cannot read statements so extremely rash and unadvised, without being forcibly impressed by the sentiments so eloquently expressed by the earliest of the Latin Fathers, *Quid Athenis et Hierosolymis? Quid Academiæ et Ecclesiæ? nostra Institutio de porticu Salomonis est; qui et ipse tradiderat Dominum in simplicitate cordis esse colendum. Vide-rint qui Stoicum et Platonicum Christianis-mum protulerunt.*

While the pure stream of Christianity became corrupted by such extraneous admixtures, we shall be little surprised that the sacred oracles of divine truth in themselves did not escape material perversion. The extravagant system of allegorical interpretation, which we have before had occasion to regret when partially and sparingly introduced by Justin, is by Clement laid down as a regular and general canon of exegesis. *Σχέδον ἡ πᾶσα ὥδε πως (δι' αἰνιγμάτων)*

θεσπίζεται ἡ γραφή^t. And he maintains, that the sacred text (in the Mosaical law at least) bore no less than four distinct meanings, the literal, the moral, the mystical, and the prophetic. A division generally recognised by the writers of this school. It must be quite unnecessary to insist on the evils of a system, which, while it forces the words of Scripture into almost any and every signification which the most capricious fancy can suggest, leaves little room on which any sound exposition can rely; it must be far from desirable to pause to collect specimens of the many forced and far-fetched perversions of Scripture into which Clement was necessarily betrayed, by his unreserved adoption of a principle so extremely lax and unwarrantable^u. The whole subject has indeed been in a former course of Lectures from this place so fully treated, and with powers so far superior to any which I could myself bring to its investigation,

^t Στρω. t. ii. et i. c. 28. p. 426. v. p. 664.

^u Several are given in Bp. Kaye's Account of Clement, p. 374, &c.

that it will be quite sufficient at present thus briefly to allude to it^w.

It ought, however, to be distinctly stated, that this systematic misinterpretation is, by an happy inconsistency, scarcely at all applied to the Scriptures of the New Testament. I will not indeed undertake to assert, that no instances of fanciful explanation may even here occur, but they are comparatively very few; and the great mass of his commentaries on this part of the sacred volume is characterised by the same sound and pious spirit, which mark the specimens presented in the previous extracts. It seems clear that one great cause of this application of the allegorical exegesis to the Old Testament, was the same desire to escape from the difficulties which occasionally appear to present themselves to a literal interpretation, which has led so many of the German theologians in a very similar spirit to attempt to resolve so much of the earlier Scriptures into *M  θoi*. Having mentioned Clement's allusions to the books of the New Testament, I may here observe,

^w Bampton Lectures for 1834.

that he distinctly quotes all those admitted into our present canon, with only three exceptions*. This testimony to the general canon, and to the accuracy of the readings at present preserved, is valuable from its early date; but, as we shall see in the next Lecture, the testimony of Irenæus, who flourished a few years before Clement, is still more copious.

It is much to be regretted, however, that Clement has likewise quoted, with unhesitating acceptance, many of the notorious forgeries which were circulated in that age^y.

We must next proceed to the more particular examination of that remarkable conception of the highest and most advanced and perfect Christian character, which it was Clement's great object to embody in

* These exceptions, which after all are somewhat doubtful, are the Epistles of James, 2 Peter, and one of the smaller of St. John; for he expressly quotes what he calls the larger Epistles of that Apostle, which distinctly shews that he must have known of at least one other.

^y e. g. An apocryphal work, entitled, The Preaching of Peter. He also agrees with Justin in quoting the forged Sibylline verses as decidedly prophetic; indeed the verse of the well-known ancient hymn, *Teste David cum Sibyllâ*, is borne out by high patristical authority.

this treatise ; a conception which, although in some points just and judicious, is yet unhappily characterized by many extravagances, and in its very foundation grossly erroneous. This character is more particularly delineated in the sixth and seventh books, but the whole work has reference to the means both of divine grace and human philosophy, by which it was supposed to be formed, and the actions in which being formed it displayed itself. Clement always designates its possessor as the true Γνωστικὸς : and although in other passages he reprobates the heretics who had assumed this boastful title, the ψευδωνύμοι Γνωστικοὶ, it must yet be confessed that his own portrait has but too many features of resemblance, in addition to the name. In the first place the whole system concerning the Γνώσις, from the exclusive possession of which this character is denominated, was built by Clement on exactly the same hypothesis adopted by the heretics themselves, an hypothesis which can scarcely be reprobated in terms of indignation adequate to its deserts, and which Irenæus, in his work

against those heretics, most properly stigmatizes and exposes^a. This supposition libels Christianity, by most falsely representing it to have adopted the distinction of an exoteric and esoteric doctrine, (the worst disgrace of the schools of Gentile philosophy,) the former being the ostensible teaching promulgated to the public, the latter confined to the select and initiated few. Thus it was asserted by Clement, that this secret knowledge had descended to few only, in regular succession from the Apostles, being handed down by unwritten tradition^a. It was not indeed supposed to have been originally communicated indifferently and unreservedly to all the Apostles, but only to those who were the witnesses of the transfiguration, and by them gradually imparted to the rest. To St. Paul also it was afterwards conveyed by peculiar and express revelation^b.

▪ His argument will be particularly noticed in the next Lecture.

^a vi. 7. p. 767. Ἡ γνῶσις κατὰ διαδόχους εἰς ὀλίγους ἐκ τῶν Ἀποστόλων ἀγράφως παραδοθεῖσα κατελήλυθεν.

^b Στρωμ. i. 1. See also Bishop Potter's note in his edition on this passage, in which it is illustrated by

To the Gnostic, who is admitted to this high and hidden wisdom, Clement ascribes the most perfect, universal, and transcendental knowledge; however numerous be the objects, incomprehensible to mankind in general, nothing can escape the penetration of the possessor of such exalted, spiritual, and intellectual privileges. He is therefore thoroughly versed in every branch of human philosophy and science, though he properly regards them only as subsidiary, and preparatory to his higher Christian faith. The examples, however, given of his objects and attainments, both in divine and human learning, are far indeed from being calculated to raise our respect for these Gnostical conceptions, either of the one or the other; and indeed marked by a puerility and mysticism almost inconceivable^c.

being compared with a citation from the Hypotyposes preserved by Eusebius.

^c They are altogether puerile, and exactly similar to the pursuits and speculations which Irenæus so justly criticises in the heretical Gnostics. In human philosophy, the arithmetical and musical sciences are represented as consisting in the investigation of the occult

The ethical characters, however, attributed to this Gnostical portrait of the imaginary perfection of the Christian character, are generally conceived in a far better and sounder spirit ; for it was quite impossible to compose a moral portrait derived from the perfect precepts of Christianity, without a strong reflection of the pure rays of evangelical light ; and very generally also

mysteries of numbers and harmonic intervals. The specimen of the vaunted Gnostical theology presented for our admiration, consists of the Gnostical exposition of the Decalogue, expressly cited as the very foundation of his religion ; in this, if we look for any moral or spiritual expansion or illustration of these precepts, we shall be altogether disappointed. Such topics, Clement probably would have addressed to the young Catechumens, but they were far too elementary for the advanced Gnostic. His attention is directed to the investigation of matters far more profound and important ; he enters on the analysis of all possible denary combinations, to account for the mystical properties which have occasioned that number to be selected for the great precepts of the Law ; and examines, in like manner, all binary combinations to prove, that the number of tables necessarily ought to be exactly two ; and the precept, consecrating the seventh day in commemoration of the Sabbathical rest from the work of creation, opens a still richer field of investigation as to all the mysteries and combinations of the number seven.

we may discover a happy and judicious tone of sobriety and moderation pervading these portions of the picture ; for in his course of life the Gnostic adopts the just mean between unchecked indulgence, and the total abstinence of an extravagant asceticism, so using the things of the world as not abusing them ; and, when exposed to persecution, he assumes the firmest and most resolute constancy in the unflinching encounter of the trial which it may please Providence to appoint for him ; but he does not provoke Providence by rushing blindly and rashly into dangers, into which he is not called, nor neglect the legitimate means of self-preservation. We have only to regret, that the moral effect even of these portions of the work, is occasionally injured by the exaggerated refinements of mysticism and quietism ^d.

^d Like Madame Guyon and the modern Quietists. Clement, however, requires in his perfect character the entire extinction, not only of all violent passions, but of almost every emotion of the mind—a total apathy. Ἡ κατάστασις δὲ ἣ τοιάδε ΑΠΑΘΕΙΑΝ ἐργάζεται οὐ ΜΕΤΡΟΠΑΘΕΙΑΝ. See vi. 9. (pp. 776, 777.) Such a total apathy he of course attributes in the first place to our

The next name to which I ought to direct your attention, must at once be anticipated ; being by far the most conspicuous not only of the Alexandrian school, but in many respects of all the early Christian writers ; Origen ; conspicuous alike for the most extraordinary powers, and too frequently for his abuse of those powers ; of whom the judgment of antiquity has become almost proverbial, “ Ubi bene nemo melius, ubi male nemo pejus.” He was trained in the schools of Alexandria under Clement, the nature of whose instructions we have already sufficiently considered, and the notorious Ammonius, who apostatized and in the spirit of universal compromise erected an amalgamated system of corrupted Christian philosophy and poly-

Lord himself, on which Scultetus most justly remarks ; “ Atqui, o Clemens, Christus ἐδάκρυσεν ad sepulchrum Lazari. (Iren. xi. 35.) Idemque ἠγαλλιάσατο τῷ πνεύματι. (Luc. x. 2.)” In the same spirit of an exaggerated refinement, ill accommodated to the moral circumstances of our nature, Clement observes, that his perfect exemplar of the Christian can require no stated time or place for prayer ; for to him, every spot is a consecrated temple, and his whole life a single and continuous holy festival.

theism. His pupil Origen, however, although in the extravagant wildness of his speculations he often plunged into the most serious errors, and although he cannot be said to have reined in his daring genius within the limits of a strict orthodoxy, even on some of the most important articles of the faith, yet never departed from that faith at all to the same degree or in the same spirit with his unfortunate instructor. Although on some occasions the boldness of his speculations may wear almost a semi-heretical character, yet to his own views of Christianity, which still included the great bulk of the faith, he constantly and consistently adhered with the firm resolution of the most devoted attachment. Descended from a succession of Christian ancestors, originally converted at the first propagation of the faith, he himself from his earliest years embraced it with a warmth of zeal characteristic of his ever fervid temper^e. And when, while yet a youth, his father was dragged to martyr-

^e Jerome, the most severe of his ancient critics, admits that he was *magnus Vir ab infantiâ*.

dom under the persecution of Severus, it required personal restraint, added to the tears and entreaties of his mother, to prevent his rushing forth to claim for himself a share in what he esteemed so glorious a fate; and while thus withheld by force from partaking his father's prison, the letters he transmitted to him there were the strongest supports of his parent's courage; in these he earnestly conjured him to stand stedfast in the faith to the last, and not to suffer his tenderness for his family to betray him into any unworthy compliance.

When the storm of this persecution had passed away, he was called in very early youth to the presidency of the catechetical school of Alexandria, which became under him more than ever distinguished; and here he commenced that remarkable career of theological literature, which was indeed the race of a giant rejoicing to run his course. The epithets constantly attached by antiquity to his name *'Αδαμάντινος* and *Χαλχέντερος*, will denote the opinion generally entertained of that adamantine and brazen

strength of mental constitution, which could sustain such indefatigable exertion. Our time will now allow us only very briefly to touch on the most important features of these intellectual exertions; but in this instance any omissions will, I am certain, be readily supplied by the previous information of many who now hear me, because there can be scarcely any critical scholar, and assuredly no student of theological literature, who must not already possess at least a general acquaintance with the extraordinary labours of this Father.

All must be well aware of the eminent critical talents displayed by him in a line which appears to have been scarcely attempted by previous scholars, and which may well serve as a model for all future undertakings of a similar nature, his exact edition of the Old Testament: in which the text was carefully determined and indicated by all those marks and methods which have since been so repeatedly imitated; and the interpretation was facilitated by the introduction of four distinct versions, arranged for the purpose of ready comparison in parallel columns.

As an expositor of Scripture, he was no less laborious than as an editor; he composed a most voluminous series of Homilies and Commentaries on every portion of holy writ of both Testaments^f. He cannot, however, in this capacity claim the praise so richly due to him as a critical editor; for it is almost unnecessary to observe, that in these expositions he rivalled or rather exceeded all the extravagances of allegorical interpretation, which his predecessors in the Alexandrian School had borrowed from their great prototype in this respect, Philo Judæus.

On this subject, however, I shall only

‘ As I have felt myself obliged in the following remarks explicitly to point out the serious defects of much of this Father’s scriptural expositions, I have far more pleasure in bringing forward on the favourable side the candid testimony of Scultetus as to the value and use which may yet be considered as belonging to these homiletical compositions. “Etsi autem hæc interpretandi ratio magnos in homilias errores invexit : non sine fructu tamen homiliæ a theologiæ studiosis, concionatoribus præsertim, legi possunt. Est namque videre in iis singulare concionandi artificium. Exordia homiliarum brevia: dictionis perspicuitas mirabilis: nihil in eo ambitiosum, nihil affectatum.” Medulla Patrum, p. 158.

again refer, as I have already done in the case of Clement, to the full and satisfactory account delivered some years back by a former Lecturer, whose steps I must ever trace with fond regret, and diffidently follow with the consciousness of powers so far inferior. It could not however, under any circumstances, have been requisite to enter into any lengthened discussion, in order to demonstrate the mischief of a system of which (though it were most unfair to impute this as its designed intention) the natural and necessary tendency could be no other, than to remove from the sacred narrative every character of historical verity, and to substitute in its place the mere shadow of a dream, the *σκιάς ὄντα* of mythical allegory.

In his exposition of the New Testament, the imagination of Origen equally delights in subjoining the same spiritual application to many of the events recorded in the Gospels; but here I would submit, that the practice assumes, from the different circumstances of the case, a very different aspect. There is evidently here no lurking desire to escape

from the literal interpretation, as unworthy of God, and unedifying to man ; but this is evidently received with the warmest cordiality of the full assurance of faith ; and the pious mind only seeks to derive, from viewing the adorable miracles which distinguished our Saviour's earthly ministry under every possible aspect, and with every application of which they can be esteemed capable, the fullest edification they are calculated to afford. The mind of man, all whose recesses are chambers of imagery, is naturally so constituted as ever to delight itself in figurative representations ; and, surely, in matters which relate to our spiritual improvement, no figures can be drawn from a source so congenial as those derived from miracles of mercy, wrought by him who went about doing good equally to the souls and bodies of men, and healing alike the diseases to which both are liable. In such instances, indeed, there appears so very natural and obvious an analogy between the literal interpretation and the spiritual application, (for both result from the same great principle of the Saviour's

love,) that the pious mind seems scarcely able to reflect on the actual narrative without that application forcibly suggesting itself. But it must be acknowledged, that Origen has often far exceeded the sober use of these principles, when, not content with thus generally tracing out the spiritual analogies suggested by such narratives, he seeks for further mysteries in every minutest action and even gesture of our blessed Lord while performing these miracles.

For six centuries from his own age to ours, the warmest debates have prevailed in the Church concerning the true character of the opinions held by Origen on the great points of Christian doctrine^h, and the tendencies of the influence which his writings were calculated to exercise on the progress of that faith. Many distinguished names have taken opposite sides in this controversy, from Jerome and Rufinus in the fifth century, to Halloix and Mosheim in

^h In Huet's *Origeniana*, p. 196, et seq. will be found a detailed account of the repeated controversies concerning the works of Origen from their publication to Huet's own times.

the eighteenth ; his admirers ever extolling the largeness of his views, and maintaining that his expressions, if candidly interpreted, are susceptible of a perfectly sound and unobjectionable interpretation ; while his opponents have repudiated many of his sentiments as absolutely heretical ; and in earlier days interposed their authority with partial and local success to place his writings on the list of prohibited worksⁱ. When I reflect then on this long discussion, I cannot but feel how ill it would become even a party far more entitled than I can be, to place confidence in the stores of his information, and the powers of his judgment, to flatter himself that his individual opinion could materially influence the librating scales. And under any circumstances it were vain to hope, that a controversy which has filled volumes, could be satisfactorily adjusted in a few para-

ⁱ A. D. 399, Theophilus, Bp. of Alexandria, and A. D. 400, Pope Anastasian, held Councils in which the errors of Origen were condemned. The violent and very questionable conduct, however, of Theophilus throughout this controversy forms a very painful chapter of early ecclesiastical history.

graphs of a single Lecture. I can only undertake the humbler task, of faithfully and candidly submitting the impressions which have remained on my own mind, from carefully examining the very full account of that controversy, in the *Origeniana* of the learned Bishop of Arranches. I have also found a most useful guide in the masterly sketch of Mosheim, given in his more detailed history of the Ante-Constantine period of the Church, which contains an able exposition of the general spirit and bearing of the philosophico-theological views of this Father.

In the first place then it may be observed, that it seems almost a self-evident consequence, from the statement which has just been made, that it cannot be at all justifiable to attach any high degree of authority to the writings of this Father; for it must be assuredly altogether unsafe to take for our guide and instructor, in any important matter, an individual, who has written in such a style as could account for the extreme discrepance of estimation to which I have alluded. Nor can we, I

think, hesitate to attribute with Mosheim that discrepance to the inconstancy and inconsistency of the opinions of Origen himself, as to its principal cause.

As the great basis of his creed we shall immediately see, that he very explicitly acknowledged all the great leading articles of the faith, in the very words of the orthodox confession; though unhappily, even while he recites these articles, he subjoins some others of a very different origin, and very questionable nature. Yet, as a general introduction, he correctly states the great principles of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; however he may have subsequently distorted them by his explanations, derived from viewing them through the medium of that philosophy which he had himself adopted, with all the unhesitating confidence of his warm temper, as the highest perfection of reason, and surest criterion of truth. Yet this very circumstance may render his testimony still more valuable as to the general tenets of the Catholic Church in his age, when we thus find him constrained to state the funda-

mental doctrines of Christianity in all their genuine simplicity. In the commencement of that very treatise *περιάρχων*, of which the remainder is unhappily but little in accordance with such a beginning, Origen distinctly acknowledges, that these doctrines had been so plainly laid down by the Apostles, as to be obvious even to the meanest capacity, as to their naked character, and in their simple facts; and we shall hereafter see why such distinctions were introduced.

These great doctrines he thus enumerates^k.

I. The unity of God the Creator of the universe.

II. The mission of Christ to call the Jews and Gentiles to the faith.

III. The eternal generation of Christ from the Father, and his ministration in the work of creation.

IV. The incarnation of Christ, by which he, being himself God, took upon him a body like our own, differing only in its mira-

^k Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, §. 3. p. 47.

culous derivation from the influence of the Holy Spirit.

V. The association of the Holy Spirit in the same honour and dignity with the Father and the Son.

We must regret to find him adding to these great primary articles respecting the Christian doctrine of the Divine nature, which have ever been embraced with the strongest catholicity of consent, others in which similar truths of general reception are mingled with matters concerning which many sincere and orthodox Christians may differ, and some even which will be marked by general rejection. Thus with the great truth, that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, he combines¹ a maxim which, thus generally stated, is liable to the most dangerous abuse, namely, that the Scripture always contains a double sense, the one open, the other abstruse and concealed, and to be detected only by a gifted few, who have attained a peculiar and transcendent knowledge.

¹ In Art. X.

Thus, although these articles are in themselves for the most part strictly orthodox, yet this last fatal doctrine, which he asserts as of equal authority, opens at once the door to the most erroneous interpretations; which may but too easily, if once received, neutralise every thing of good and sound which had before found admission.

Thus we find this dangerous principle carried out to its most mischievous extent in other places, where Origen more distinctly explains himself^m. The literal sense of the Scripture constituted, he tells us, only its external body, but in the latent and mystical sense consisted its living soul. This was shrouded beneath the veil of figurative expression and typical history. The most assiduous study and contemplation of this latent soul of allegory could alone elevate the powers of the mind to discern the true causes and the philosophical connections of the whole scheme of

^m Συνέστηκεν ἡ γραφὴ ἐκ σώματος μὲν τοῦ βλεπομένου ψυχῆς δὲ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ νοουμένης, καὶ καταλαμβανομένης, καὶ πνεύματος τοῦ κατὰ τὰ ὑποδείγματα, καὶ σκιὰν τῶν ἐπουρανίων.
Ex. 2do in Leo Hom. ed. Huet. i. 26.

Christian doctrine; and thus to exhibit the exact accordance of the discoveries of human reason and divine revelation.

The necessity of this philosophico-theological investigation, in order to detect the true sense of the Scriptures, is thus insisted on. The literal sense, it is urged, only sets forth in the most naked form the general fact of the existence of certain truths, but conveys to us no information whatever as to the causes and reasons of these truths. This information is, however, considered to be shrouded in the recondite and mystical sense of the Scriptures, yet in such a manner as to require the application of the light of philosophy in order to detect it by the general harmony which is thus establishedⁿ.

ⁿ I have here adopted the explanation given by Mosheim (De reb. Christ. Ante Const. Mag. p. 619, 620.) of some very obscure passages in Rufinus's translation of the lost treatise Περὶ Ἀρχῶν. It must never, however, be forgotten, that one of the harmonies suggested by this powerful mind, always comprehensive though often fanciful, afforded to Bp. Butler the germ of the ablest example of the true application of philosophy to religion; for in his Introduction he refers the foundation of his argument from analogy to the following passage from Origen; χρὴ μέντοιγε τὸν ἀπαξ παραδεξάμενον τοῦ

This light, however, he tells is, could be gained by the favoured few alone admitted to a peculiar and closer friendship with God, and to more excellent gifts of knowledge, to the *λόγος σοφίας*, and *λόγος γνώσεως* by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, in their reasons and causes, the whole body of scriptural truth could only be justly apprehended through this mystical mixture of allegorical and philosophical interpretation; and there was also another and important relation of these truths narrated in the Scriptures as simple facts, the investigation of which, so far as it was in any measure capable of being pursued by our present faculties, must be exclusively consigned to philosophy alone, namely, the mode of their subsistence. On this high metaphysical question, the Scriptures were entirely silent. It was indeed in its very nature so transcendental, as almost to exceed the highest powers of all created intelligence.

κτίσαντος τὸν κόσμον εἶναι, ταύτας τὰς γραφὰς πεπεισθαι, ὅτι ὅσα περὶ τῆς κτίσεως ἀπαντᾷ τοῖς ζητοῦσι τὸν περὶ αὐτῆς λόγον, ταῦτα καὶ περὶ τῶν γραφῶν. E Comment. in Psalm. ed. Huet. i. 40.

It must be quite unnecessary to point out the extreme dangers of a method of interpretation, such as that which has been above described, in which the admission of every theological truth, as being clearly revealed in Scripture, is confined to the naked fact, and we are allowed at our pleasure to invest these naked facts with whatever speculative garb may appear to our own minds most agreeable to the theoretical system we may be pleased to dignify by the name of philosophy. It must be evident that this first admission of scriptural truth will be practically confined to mere words, and that the whole colour and true acceptation of that verbal admission must be superinduced from this so styled philosophy alone. For though it professes to be partly checked by a comparison with the latent and mystical sense attributed to the Scriptures, yet it must be plainly seen, that this forced sense is but excogitated purposely, in order to facilitate the accommodation of that sacred record to speculations derived from the most extraneous sources ; and we need not

pause to shew the perfect adaptation of this process of allegorical and mystical interpretation, to extort from any given text whatsoever any sense which might be desired.

And the philosophy so highly prized, and considered as the perfection of human reason, and the sure repository of truths as clearly manifested to men by that heaven-taught principle within, as were the doctrines of scriptural revelation by direct inspiration, was little indeed worthy of the exaggerated confidence reposed in it. It was a composite edifice, heaped together principally by the master-builders of the Alexandrian school, out of detached members selected from the Academy, the Lycæum, and the Portico ; and, like many of the architectural piles of the lower empire, similarly decorated from the rifled columns and capitals of a purer age, it wanted all the simplicity, beauty, and symmetry, of the original structures°. It is, however, only

° It cannot be at all necessary here to enter into any particular explanation of the philosophical character of the schools of the Eclectics and Neo Platonists. All who

the influence which the doctrines of this school were calculated to exercise on theological questions, which can properly engage our present attention^p. And this will be sufficiently elucidated from the observations, which it now becomes my duty, in concluding this Lecture, to make on the modifications which, resulting from such sources, appear to have affected the

may be interested in such subjects may well be referred to the pages of Brucker and Mosheim.

^p The philosophical principles of Origen are principally developed in his treatise Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, of which the original Greek has perished; and a Latin translation, executed in a style extremely inelegant and obscure by his admirer and advocate Ruffinus, has alone descended to us. As before this was made, objections had been urged by Jerome against the views of Origen, the translator avows that he had suppressed some passages and altered others in order to prevent misconception; we are therefore often unable to ascertain how far we are in possession of the exact views of Origen himself. The peculiar principles he adopted from the Neo Platonists, principally relate to the following points. 1. The infinite succession of worlds which had from eternity proceeded from the Creator's power. 2. The nature of spiritual intelligences of an higher order. 3. The origin, pre-existence, condition, and future prospects of the human soul. In teaching all these subjects it is unnecessary to observe, that the concentrated essence of mysticism imparted a general character to the whole system.

views inculcated by Origen with regard to the great doctrines of the Christian faith.

In the first place then, the great fundamental point of every theological system, namely, the power of God as the great eternal first cause of all that has been made, supreme over all things which he had called into being, has assuredly never been maintained with greater force and eloquence than by Origen himself. But numerous are the vain and metaphysical subtleties, which even on this great doctrine have been permitted to intrude themselves where the simplicity of an adoring faith is alone admissible. The question is discussed, how far this creative power is absolutely infinite, or whether it must not be considered as having definite limits, and confined to the actual creation¹.

¹ See Origeniana, l. ii. c. 2. Quæstio i. p. 29. Another charge, however, which has been made against Origen, namely, that he did not consider the Divine nature as absolutely incorporeal, must clearly have originated from misconception; for he repeatedly and most unequivocally distinguished between the Deity and every other mind, asserting that he alone is truly and absolutely immaterial, while every other intellectual existence par-

The mind of Origen appears also to have embraced the Platonic doctrine of the co-eternity of the world with the Deity himself. Since that world, the necessary emanation of a necessary being, the body of which he was the soul, could not (any more than its divine source) know the trace of a beginning or the prospect of an end. Origen appears to have assented to these views, and to have asserted, that the *παντοκράτωρ* could never have existed *ἄνευ τῶν κρατοῦμενων*. Such speculations were attempted to be reconciled with the scriptural account of the recent origin and destined destruction of our own system by the stoical hypothesis of an infinite series of such mundane systems, of which our own constituted only a single term^r.

The general doctrine of the Trinity, it was by no means difficult for Origen to exhibit in perfect consistency with his Platonic views: for as he conceived all things to takes of matter, though in its most subtle and ethereal form.

^r Methodius distinctly cites these words from the original treatise, *περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, but tells us, that the passage, l. ii. 2. had been *non parum deformatum a Ruffino*.

have proceeded in an eternal series of emanations from the Divine nature, he readily assigned to the Son and to the Holy Spirit the first and highest places in this series. Their procession^t he compared with the emission of rays of light from the sun, and the derivation of rivers and their streams from the sea; the smallest of these divided portions being in nature and substance one with the parent source. It is easy to see, that either the Sabellian or Arian might employ such illustrations quite as effectually as the Catholic; indeed the former will usually be found the most partial to the employment of analogies, at best irrelevant and vague; while the more strictly orthodox may well shrink from such additions, and be most anxious on such subjects to restrict their thoughts and language to the exact declarations of Scripture; not seeking to explain these by metaphysical argument, but content to receive them in the simplicity of faith. The vague and inconstant language of Origen has given almost an equal title to either party to claim

^t Origeniana, l. ii. c. 2. Quæst. 12. p. 45.

him for their own^u. Some allowance, however, ought properly to be made for the use of less guarded language in this age, before the ability and activity of Arius had given to the errors which he advocated a definite form, and had so strongly called the attention of theologians to their examination; and it should be admitted, that as the Sabelian views were then the most prominent errors, a pardonable want of caution might have betrayed minds engrossed with the desire to guard against these into the use

^u Bishop Bull, Def. Fid. Nic. sect. ii. c. 9. endeavours partially to account for these phenomena from the interpolations which have been effected in many of his writings, and supposes that his work against Celsus is the only one which has descended to us free from such adulterations; and this also he more particularly refers to as the latest and most mature of his productions; but the admission which follows is, perhaps, not much calculated to benefit his apology in the view of a frank, honest, and manly mind; *Cæterum si omnia Origenis Scripta eaque pura et incorrupta hodie extarent. haud omnia tamen veræ ac genuinæ ejus sententiæ declarandæ pariter inservirent.* Nam alia ad amicos secreto scripsit, quæ lucem nunquam visura speravit, in quibus libere ac pene sceptice disseruit, . . . alia ipse in publicum emisit in quibus viâ tritâ ac tutâ incedens receptam in Ecclesia Catholica doctrinam studiosius tradidit.

of expressions tending to an opposite excess, of which the injurious consequences were not at the time apprehended. Yet after reading the vindications which have been urged in his behalf, I must confess that I am quite unable to satisfy my own mind that the views of Origen did not far more nearly approximate to high Arianism than to any other system^{*}; although he is un-

^{*} I would invite any one who may doubt the justice of this opinion, to peruse carefully Origen's commentary on the first chapter of St. John; (Huet's edition of the *Ἑξηγητικά*, t. ii. 56.) there appears no room whatever for the suspicion of interpolation in this document. Here in the exposition of the passage in which St. John ascribes the title Θεός to the Λόγος, [*καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος,*] Origen dwells largely on the omission of the article before Θεός in the latter clause as contrasted with its insertion in the former; the word he argues was a God, as distinguished from the supreme God, with whom he was; he represents his divine power to be entirely derivative from that of the Father, and his agency in creation (John i. 3.) to have been secondary, inferior, and instrumental, εἰ πάντα ΔΙΑ τοῦ Λόγου ἐγένετο οὐχ ὑΠΟ τοῦ Λόγου ἀλλ' ὑΠὸ ΚΡΕΙΤΤΟΝΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ παρὰ τὸν Λόγον· τις δ' ἂν ἀλλὸς οὗτος τυγχάνη ἢ ὁ Πατήρ. Origen also, when he speaks of Christ as the object of prayer, often uses expressions which appear to imply that he considered him to be such only in an inferior sense, and rather as an intercessor with the Father. Prayer,

doubtedly far remote from any of the inferior grades of that multifarious sect.

With regard to the double nature of Christ as incarnate, and what is called the hypostatic union, the views of Origen can still less be said to be based on any system of scriptural interpretation; their unsubstantial fabric being altogether derived from the dreams of his own mystical psychology. This union he maintained to exist between the divine word and human soul alone of Jesus; for he argued, that the Divine nature could only be united with any human nature, through the intervention of some mediant principle like the human soul, which he conceived to participate both of a spiritual and of a more subtle material nature. This association^y of the Λόγος and human soul of Jesus, he explains he says, was offered Κυριολόγως to the Father, and κατὰ χρηστικῶς to the Son. Contr. Cels. l. 5. Again, l. 8. We must pray only to the God over all, [a phrase always used by Origen to denote the Father,] yet we may pray also to the only-begotten Word, first-born of all creation, and request of him as our high priest to offer up our prayer, which cometh through him, unto his God and our God. See Origeniana, l. ii. c. 2. Quæst. 29.

^y See Origeniana, l. ii. Quæst. 3.

in a manner and style of romantic mysticism, which the sober criticism of doctrinal theology can assuredly never recognize. Assuming his favourite hypothesis of the preexistence of all souls, he imagines, that the Spirit destined to become the human soul of our Lord, had, during this pre-existent state, devoted all its faculties to the warmest love of the second Person of the Trinity, in whom it recognized the divine Author of its being. To him therefore it had inseparably attached itself, as to the Word and Wisdom of God, the Truth and the True Light. By the intensity of this devotion it became entirely absorbed in him, and in his light and splendour, so as to be justly called one Spirit, becoming identified with him, to whom it was thus by love united. And through the persistence of the same union, when this pre-existent Spirit became the human soul of Jesus, the Word still accompanying it jointly animated the same fleshly tabernacle^z.

* The Λόγος was also considered by Origen as the universal source of reason, and in this capacity all rational beings might be said to participate in him.

It may perhaps be said, that this mystical speculation, though it must be altogether rejected as a most unwarranted and unwarrantable addition to the truths of revelation, yet does not appear calculated to lead to any very injurious practical consequences affecting our reception of the great doctrines of the Gospel. But we can hardly so lightly pass over the representation of Origen with regard to that great fundamental point, the very sum and substance of Christianity, the atonement offered by its divine Founder. I shall not indeed insist on the objections of Mosheim, that he appears to have regarded that atonement in the light of an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world, rather than a vicarious satisfaction made to Divine justice for the guilt of our race. I shall not, I say, insist at all upon this point, because I am fully convinced, that where the former and undoubtedly scriptural doctrine of the expiatory sacrifice of Christ is truly held, the practical difference between the two views will almost become evanescent: and the discrepance will consist rather in the tech-

nical phraseology and mode of expression, than in the real substance of the doctrine held as the hope of our souls. And so far we may be well satisfied, that Origen with true faith regarded the Lord Christ as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world; but yet we must lament, that he has, even on this most important subject, coupled with this great truth errors calculated altogether to invalidate its force. While he held that all sin required a propitiation by blood, he did not restrict this efficacy to the blood of the one great sacrifice. This he indeed esteemed the most excellent and the only universal atonement; but yet he attributed a similar though more partial virtue to the blood of every righteous man^a, from Abel to Zacharias, *ad expiandum pro aliqua parte populum*^b.

^a Hom. xxiv. He however adds, that the sacrifices of the just availed only through their prayers, and Christ's alone by its proper merits.

^b Origen (*Ἐξηγητικά*, t. ii. p. 38.) has some strange notions concerning the extent of the benefits of Christ's sacrifice. He argues, that it is absurd to restrict such a text as *ὕπὲρ πάντος ἐγεύσατο θανάτου*, to the redemption of man alone, but that it must be considered as including

In regard to the doctrines of grace^c, Jerome has very forcibly charged him with being the great source from whence the Pelagians derived their errors, and it would seem difficult to vindicate him satisfactorily from this charge.

If in these more purely theological doctrines we have already had occasion to animadvert on the introduction of so much of wild and mystical speculation, we shall be less surprised in all the questions which relate to psychology^d, and the doctrine of spiritual natures, to find the great staple of his opinions composed of the same fanciful materials. In his theory concerning the human soul of Christ, we have already seen, that Origen believed all human souls to have possessed a previous state of separate existence before their descent on earth. In this they had been endowed with the power of free-will, and capable of using or

all beings whatsoever capable of sin; perhaps even the stars, since Job says the stars are not clean in his sight. He adds, however, εἰ μὴ ὑπερβολικῶς λέγεται. See Origeniana, l. ii. c. 3. Quæst. 20.

^c See Origeniana, l. ii. c. 2. Quæst. 7.

^d See Origeniana, l. ii. c. 2. Quæst. 6.

abusing that power; according to the merits or demerits thus contracted, they were doomed to different conditions when called by their junction with human bodies to make their appearance in this state of being. Fond fancies, principally borrowed from the well known psychological speculations of Plato, and more congenial to the metempsychosis which Pythagoras had once imported from this very Alexandrian climate, than consistent with any views of Christian truth.

With regard to the resurrection of the body^e, Origen has been reproached as not believing that the soul was to resume the same identical body which it had here borne, but a changed and far more glorious body; but such a censure must surely fall equally on St. Paul himself, and we cannot therefore consider it as requiring any other remark.

All punishment^f was regarded by Origen as remedial in its nature, and he therefore

^e See Origeniana, l. ii. c. 2. Quæst. 9.

^f See Origeniana, l. ii. c. 3. Quæst. 20. This doctrine of the salvability of dæmons is directly opposed by Irenæus.

looked for the final purgation and restoration of all the guilty, even including the fallen Angels.

His theories of dæmonology, and speculations as to the angelic natures^g, are wild in the extreme, and almost Rosicrucian. Guardian angels were assigned to nations, to Churches, and to individuals; and of these the whole economy is described with an assumption of precise information, which on such a subject seems almost ludicrous. According to these views, the associated Spirit should sometimes appear to be rather dependent on the man, than the man on the angel; since the angelic patron is said himself to make a spiritual progress coordinate with that of his earthly client, and according to the merits and virtues of the latter to be admitted more or less intimately to the vision of the heavenly Father, or by his demerits excluded. Yet on the other hand we are told, that the angelic intelligences have themselves had their various earthly relations assigned from their own qualities; the most holy being the honoured messengers

^g See Origeniana, l. ii. c. 2. quæst. 5.

of the prayers of the saints, while some have become so far degraded, as fitly to preside only over the lower animals. To evil spirits a similar intercourse with and influence over the human race, was ascribed.

Strongly, however, as we are bound to insist on the highly injurious influences which must necessarily result from corrupting the sacred purity of Christian truth by an alloy so base as these extravagances of mystical speculation, it should yet in fairness to Origen be stated, that he very commonly himself has the modesty to propose these things rather in the light of mere speculative enquiries, than of positive truth. But in any degree and under any circumstances, it must be fearfully perilous, thus to give a loose rein to the caprices of a wild and fanciful imagination, when we are studying in the very mount of God; where the only frame that can become our reason, must be to receive with deep awe, implicit submission, and simple faith, the divine communications on subjects so far transcending all the faculties not of ourselves alone, but of

every other created and finite intelligence.

But thus to indulge an exuberant fancy, and in the pride of intellect, to refuse to admit check or limit to its boldest and most excursive speculations, is not the fault of a single individual, or single school. It is the common temptation of ardent, active, and powerful minds; and especially when the mental faculties in all the freshness of their early vigor, are trying their powers in the season of youth, few probably have been unconscious of some tendencies of this kind. Let us not then rise from the subject we have been now considering with our attention fixed upon the intellectual errors of an Origen alone; let us from them learn to suspect and correct our own. Let us remember, that the Neological speculations of the nineteenth century are to the full as dangerous as the Alexandrian speculations of the third. Let us school our minds to submit to that discipline and restraint, to which our reasoning no less than our moral powers are so reluctant. Let us cast down imaginations, and every high

thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ^h. Let us cherish that childlike simplicity and humility, which our Lord so forcibly implied to be the only temper calculated effectually to embrace his Gospel, when he exclaimed, “ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babesⁱ. ”

^h 1 Cor. x. 5.

ⁱ Matt. xi. 25.

LECTURE V.

1 COR. xi. 19.

There must also be heresies amongst you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.

IN the later Lectures we have been too often called to consider the errors and extravagances substituted for the sacred simplicity of Christian faith, by the affectation of philosophical interpretation. We shall probably, therefore, turn with relief and satisfaction to the examination of documents of a far more sound and sober character, the writings of that class of Fathers who may properly be called dogmatical, inasmuch as they were content to maintain in their strict and simple form the great articles of their authoritative creed, the *κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας*, or *regula fidei*, and were little anxious to seek for refined explanations of those articles, in the labyrinths of metaphysical speculation,

or to shroud them in the fanciful veil of mysticism.

The earliest and most important of the Fathers of whom I am now about to speak, Irenæus and Tertullian, were principally engaged (the former indeed exclusively so) in the task of repelling, as it were from the very cradle of the faith, that strange and portentous brood of error, the various progeny of the Gnostic name, which with the lubricity and venom of serpents clung around it; it may therefore seem almost of absolute necessity, in order to enable us to form a just estimate of the orthodox writers opposed to them, to premise a few preliminary observations on these heretics themselves.

Since, however, this very subject was but a few years past copiously discussed by our late most lamented Regius Professor of Divinity in a series of Lectures from this pulpit, with an ability and learning which can leave nothing further to be desired, it cannot be again necessary to enter into any detail: I shall therefore confine myself to such a brief statement of general prin-

ciples, as may be best calculated to introduce and explain the allusions which my own peculiar subject may occasion.

It must be painful to all, and to some may have appeared perplexing, that the very same period selected by Providence as that in which truth should spring from the earth, should also have been productive of such a luxuriant crop of error. But when we look more attentively at the case, we may see causes in operation which necessarily tended to favour this unhappy intermixture. Such is the condition of our present state of probation, that the very same circumstances which in one direction operate for our good, may often under other modifications prove the occasions of falling; and we shall see this to have been especially the case in the history of our faith. The revelation of truth was made, we are told, when the fulness of time was come; and this fulness of time was evidently marked by the general concurrence at that particular period, of all those predisposing causes, which might best prepare the minds of men eagerly to receive the new faith. The fields

of the earth were already white to the harvest.

No one who has studied the page of history with a reflective mind, can have failed to observe, that the different ages of human society have been prevalently marked with very different and peculiar moral and intellectual characteristics. The mind of man has in one age bent all its powers with eagerness in one direction, in another its bias has become diverted into a course the most remote. As in the physical history of men we notice the periodical appearance of epidemical disorders, so in his mental history we may trace the intervention of moral and intellectual epidemics. Nor need we in either case have recourse for explanation to any hypothesis of mysterious or occult properties. But rather in both we shall find simple, natural, and analogous causes, quite adequate to afford a satisfactory solution of the phenomena; namely, the concurrence of predisposing circumstances, and the spread of that contagion which may be diffused from mind to mind, as readily as from body to body. In the moral history of mankind we cannot, con-

sistently with our acknowledgment of a superintending Providence, doubt but that these circumstances are under the guidance of that Providence, though we see it still acting by such general laws as not of necessity to preclude the possibility of some evil consequences, which those general laws may involve.

I might well exemplify my meaning, by alluding to the great æra of the Reformation. No one can overlook the features of the mighty crisis of mind, which marked that æra. No one can fail to observe, how all the circumstances of that period were calculated to arouse the intellect to emancipate itself from the darkness and bondage which had so long oppressed it, and to emerge exultingly into the light of that truth which should indeed make it free. Yet with whatever gratitude we may look to the noble effects of that day of deliverance, must not our triumphs be saddened with deep regret, when we see the sunshine of that bright dawn chequered with lowering and tempestuous clouds; and the very same condition of the moral atmosphere which

lighted a beacon to guide to his arduous struggle the champion of Erfurth, kindling also the flames of extravagant and criminal fanaticism in Munster, and the dangerous and deceitful glare of heresy in Cracow.

The mental and moral features of the period of the revival of Christian truth are sufficiently analogous, to afford an important illustration to those of its original promulgation. There appears in like manner to have been generally diffused at that earlier day, a growing discontent with the prevalent superstition, and an eager search after new modes of faith, which might appear of a purer, more intellectual, and more availing character; there was an eager and curious search into those philosophical points, which seemed most to concern the spiritual interests of man; such as the existence and nature of God, and the causes and remedies of moral evil. This temper of mind, we cannot doubt, when rightly directed, was most favourable to the propagation of Christian truth: but we might also have anticipated, even if history had been silent, how liable such a dispo-

sition must also have been to perversion and abuse; allowing unbridled scope to curious and unlearned questions, on points altogether transcending human faculties and human acquirements; and throwing wide the gate of ivory to the dreamy fancies of mysticism. There was at this period a stirring of the ground, especially preparing it to receive the seeds of Christianity, which heaven was about to shed into its bosom; but the adversary was abroad, and preparing to sow his own tares amidst the hopes of a better harvest.

It is evident that most, if not all, of these early heresies, received their predominant character from the philosophical views adopted and promulgated by their founders. Tertullian distinctly refers them to the abstruser investigations of metaphysical theology, on such questions as *unde malum et quare? et unde homo et quomodo? et quod proxime proposuit Valentinus unde Deus?* I am persuaded that we generally entertain ideas far from adequate of the very wide extent, and very great influence

of the philosophical schools and teachers of that day. These philosophical Colleges resembled much more the Colleges of the preaching Friars of the middle ages, than any thing else to which I can compare them; for we must remember, that philosophy was then in effect the only religion really received by any man of superior station, or cultivated mind, and had therefore all the pervading and penetrating influence, which religion alone can exert over the social mass. The history of the youth of each of the philosophical Fathers whom we have been lately considering, is sufficient to demonstrate how essential to education a complete training in these schools was then commonly regarded^a.

^a We may also draw the same conclusion from the recognitions or autobiographical memoir attributed to Clemens Romanus, which though assuredly a forgery, is yet highly interesting in its real character of a religious romance composed as early as the second century. In the introductory chapters of this narrative, we find most graphically portrayed the early struggles of his mind, while anxiously engaged in investigating the theological and metaphysical questions, to which I have alluded; his assiduous but vain attendance at the philosophical Schools, in the hope of obtaining a satisfactory solution of

It has been often questioned, whether the philosophical basis of Gnosticism ought to be considered as claiming an oriental origin, or as rather derived from the more celebrated schools of Greece, to which their orthodox opponents, as being themselves most familiar with these, usually refer them; but in truth many of the minor provincial schools of philosophy appear very generally to have interwoven indifferently into their systems tenets borrowed from the Persian Zoroaster or Egyptian Mercury, with those of the later Platonists, and even with such portions of the local superstitions, as they could conveniently work together into a general system of mysticism. To this general principle of accommodation, the interests more especially of these Heresiarchs would naturally have led them; with objects and in a spirit far different from those of the great Apostle, they would corruptly adopt his prudential

the difficulties which perplexed him; and the delight with which (his mind being thus predisposed) he listened, during his visit to Rome, to the preaching of the Gospel by Peter in that city.

maxim, and willingly become all things to all men, if by any means they might gain some. The theories, therefore, which have variously traced these mystical systems to the Oriental, the Egyptian, or the Platonic philosophies, or the Jewish Cabbala, may each contain partial views of the truth, which if taken collectively they would represent in its integrity; indeed all these several sources may have had originally much in common with each other; for we know that the early remains of the science and philosophy^b of Egypt and of the East, present the clearest evidence of an intimate original connection; we know also that Plato, and before him Pythagoras, had explored all the learning of Egypt; and the mystical and false tradition with which the daughter of Judah had latterly corrupted the divine faith committed to her charge, was obviously a foreign lesson which she had learnt, while sitting a captive beneath the willows on the banks of Euphrates.

From whatever source might have sprung

^b This is particularly obvious with regard to their astronomical monuments.

the various sects included under the general Gnostic name, we find the same common principle pervading the whole, and that principle developed under various forms indeed, yet all having features of congenial resemblance, though not of perfect identity. This general fundamental principle consisted in the endeavour to remove as far as possible from the supreme and invisible God, every participation in the production of a material world so impregnated with evil as our own system. The Creator of this world, therefore, they ever regarded as a Being altogether distinct from, if not opposed to, the high God. It will be readily surmised that it must be far from easy intelligibly to trace out the various processes which they imagined with this view^b.

^b There is not merely difficulty in reconciling the opinions ascribed to the different leaders of these various sects, for such a discrepance might naturally have been expected; but I have generally found myself quite unable to combine the notices given by the Fathers of the views of the same individual heresiarch into any thing like an uniform and consistent system; nor need we by any means attribute this altogether to the misconceptions under which those unfriendly critics may have laboured; nay possibly, did we possess their original works, the

In general, this prevalence of evil was ascribed in agreement with the schools of Plato, to the influence of matter; a principle regarded as instinct with a brute and blind force of irregular and inordinate appetite and motion; from this evil source the sensitive and mere animal vitality of our nature was derived, but the more ethereal spark of the rational soul was esteemed an emanation from the supreme and good God, who dwelt in the highest heaven, or as they termed it the Pleroma^c.

difficulty would have been in no material degree diminished; for any one who should attempt what might appear an easier task, to extract from the *Timæus* or *Parmenides* of Plato any definite, distinct, and intelligible system, will probably find himself under little less embarrassment.

I have been principally guided in the general account I have given of these sects, by Lardner's essay on the history of the early heretics, to which I am indebted for most of the references in the following notes.

^c The supreme and all-good God was represented as dwelling in an heavenly sphere of inaccessible brightness and glory called the Pleroma. This term, which naturally recalls the Scriptural expression, 'the fulness of him that filleth all in all,' was not understood to include infinite space, for the whole brute mass of matter was without its pure and celestial limits.

From this great Supreme, it was imagined that a long series of spiritual and intellectual existences had from eternity originated; these were termed *Æons* (*Αἰῶνες*), the first were his immediate offspring, the rest had been propagated in an extended line of descent from one another. In proportion as they receded from the pure source whence they originally sprung, they became themselves less pure, and more tainted with the corruptions of the outer regions of darkness and matter^d.

^d It seems quite clear that these *Æons*, (at any rate the lower race of them,) essentially correspond with the *δαιμόνες* whom Plato himself had probably borrowed from the mystical East, which seems ever to have been the prolific parent of such fanciful beings. I shall accordingly not scruple to speak of this portion of the Gnostic system as its *dæmonology*. In the theory of the creation of the material world, however, there was a material difference between the sentiments of the Platonists and Gnostics; for while Plato assigned a large share in the administration of that world to his *dæmons* as having been delegated to them by the supreme God; yet he ever attributed creation itself to the immediate demiurgic energy of the great Supreme, who thus endeavoured to reduce to a better state the inordinate material mass, and to educe from it the greatest good of which it was capable. For Plato evidently considered the power even of the supreme Deity himself, as limited by the

The Gnostics usually attributed the creation of this nether world to one or more among the lowest of these Æons. For it was imagined that the Supreme Goodness was thus exonerated from any direct share in the origination of its load of sin and misery; whether these arose from the perversity of its material elements, or the degeneracy and corruption of the creative Æons. It is extremely difficult to ascertain the exact moral character which any one of the Gnostic sects really assigned to these imaginary demiurgic powers. Sometimes they speak of the Creator of this world in terms which would seem appropriate

perversity of the materials on which he had to act. Matter in this system was clearly regarded as a principle coeternal and equally indestructible with the Divine nature itself. Nor is it merely represented as an inert principle, but as instinct with an irregular and disorderly activity, by which it became the source of every perverse appetite, and the general principle of evil. It must be quite obvious, that such a system differs rather in expression than in substance, from the Dualism of the East; for in both we equally find two eternal principles, the one of good and the other of evil; and it surely matters very little whether we call these antagonist powers 'Ο ΘΕΟΣ and 'ΥΑΗ, or Ormuzd and Ahreman. See *Timæus*, ed. Ser. iii. 40. and *Convivium*, ed. Serr. iii. 202, 203.

only to the evil principle himself, at others only as exercising over his creation a rule of despotic and unmitigated severity; and as having with his associated Æons claimed to themselves in the arrogance of their pride, those divine honours from their creatures, which properly belonged to the Supreme Lord of the Heavenly Pleroma alone. Thus far then at least, these demi-urgic powers had already at the æra of creation become rebels and apostates from their great first parent. In this strange mass of contradictions, however, we find that the very same sects at one time maintained, that the Supreme God had not been consulted in the work, and at another that the same Supreme had, *more Platonico*, himself supplied the archetypal patterns of the universe. And from him were derived in some unexplained and inexplicable manner, by all these systems, the rational and spiritual souls, conjoined in our nature with the sentient and concupiscent mind of the flesh, which men were supposed to inherit from matter. The great end then of the high philosophy of the true ΓΝΩΣΙΣ, was to

deliver these celestial inmates from the gross chains of their corporeal prison, and to elevate them from the worship of the creative but inferior Æons, to that of the unknown Supreme.

Thus far I have exhibited these views, only as those of a mystical theism, which was probably the form in which they were first adopted by their original propagators ; it remains to be explained, what modifications their subsequent association with Christianity produced. The Gnostics of course identified the God of the Jews with the principal of the demiurgic Æons ; and considered the Mosaic law as delivered in order to enforce the strict and harsh code of his government, and his usurpation of divine honours ; the other spiritual powers associated with this chief became in like manner the gods of the other nations. At length the great and truly good Lord of the Pleroma, regarding with compassion the degraded state of the rational souls which were originally emanations from his own nature, sent his Christ, represented as the highest and most nearly allied of all

the spiritual beings which had proceeded from himself, to accomplish that general spiritual deliverance which was the great end of the whole system; this he was to effect, by overthrowing the power and destroying the pretensions of the demi-urgic usurpers, by proclaiming the true God, (before his advent totally unknown to the world,) and by raising the soul in baptism to this purer knowledge. If in this it made due progress, it would on the dissolution of the body become translated to the bliss of the Pleroma; otherwise it would be relegated afresh to a new series of purgatorial transmigrations, until this great end should be sufficiently accomplished.

Many of the Gnostics, unwilling to admit that Christ, the highest and purest emanation of Deity, could in any way become associated with a material frame, believed that the apparent body of our Lord was altogether visionary and immaterial, and were therefore called Docetæ^e; others believed that

* This appears to have been a very early opinion, as we find Ignatius repeatedly arguing against it in the very beginning of the second century.

the Æon Christ had descended on the human nature of Jesus in baptism.

With respect to his death, it never appears to have been considered by the Gnostics in the light of an atonement for sin; but simply as the natural result of the malice of the spiritual lords of this world, who were provoked to conspire his destruction by his mission for overthrowing their dominion. Since, however, the Æon Christ was in his own nature impassible, it was supposed by some that this Æon was previously withdrawn; by others, that Jesus did not himself actually suffer, but that Simon the Cyrenian, who bore his cross, was permitted to assume his outward form, and to endure the death of that cross in his stead^f. The Docetæ could not have been embarrassed by these difficulties, for according to their views the whole scene was but an unreal vision.

^f Most readers must remember the quotations from the Koran, given in the note 88 to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, c. 50. shewing that the Mahometans had adopted similar views as to the crucifixion. The notion that another had been substituted on the cross for Jesus, occurs also in the forged gospel of the Pseudo Barnabas.

It must, indeed, appear truly difficult to conceive how any sect, which professed in any degree to receive the faith delivered by Christ, could for a moment attempt to reconcile with that profession their denial of the supreme Deity of the great Creator of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom Christ ever honoured as his Father and his God ; or how they could have hoped to represent Christ himself as brought into the world to overthrow the authority of that Jehovah, whose will he expressly came to do.

How then did they attempt to reconcile such tenets with the reception of any portion of the Gospels ? In the first place they mutilated these evangelical documents, admitting only the general historical facts there recorded. And they in like manner set up a series of garbled extracts from the Pauline Epistles, selecting such passages as they could most easily pervert into a sense which might appear altogether hostile to the law of the Old Testament. But however much they might mutilate these documents, yet amply sufficient must have re-

maintained to have refuted their system, while a single section was permitted to stand, had that section been admitted in its obvious and literal sense. The doctrine of a double sense was therefore strenuously inculcated, and the Gnostic appealed to his own fanciful interpretations, (which he maintained to be hidden in the sacred text beneath the veil of figure and allegory,) as alone conveying the genuine mind of the Spirit; for he insisted that our Lord had ever taught two doctrines, the one public and esoteric, and apparently accommodated to the prejudices of the multitude, in order that he might gradually win them to the faith; while that truth itself was delivered only in private and esoteric lessons to a chosen few, deemed worthy of admission to this perfect *Γνωσις*, and from them had been handed down by perpetual tradition to fit successors[§].

[§] Irenæus informs us (iii. 4.) that the heretics when urged with Scripture appealed to tradition, *quia non possit ex his [Scripturis] inveniri veritatem ab iis qui nesciunt Traditionem*, and had thus been admitted into the participation of the true *ΓΝΩΣΙΣ*. They defended this hypothesis of a secret and esoteric doctrine confined

We cannot but recollect how much of the germs of these most pernicious doctrines were held by the Alexandrian Fathers; and to what a fearful extent they were developed by Clemens. We have the same complicated dæmonology^h, the same allegorical interpretation, the same esoteric and secret doctrine, and the same hypothesis of its transmission through the perfectly initiated few; and we are enabled the more distinctly to perceive the genuine character and tendencies of such unwar-

to the initiated by perverting the very same text of St. Paul, *Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις*, which Clemens Alexandrinus also abused for a similar purpose.

^h The whole mystical and Platonical web of the two systems appears to have been the same, only that in the Gnostic woof we find interwoven their own peculiar notions that their Æons, otherwise the just representatives of the *δαιμονές*, were not only the administrators, but the creators of the material universe; that the Canon of the Jewish Scripture was to be entirely rejected; and the God there taught repudiated as an inferior if not evil principle. The speculations, however, of both parties on the nature of Christ, and the nature and prospects of the human soul, bore a near resemblance; and in both we find the same passion for allegorical interpretation, and the same perverted ingenuity in endeavouring to trace out numerical mysteries, and the like dreams of a morbid fancy.

rantable notions, when we see them thus naturally associated with the grossest and most Anti-Christian heresies.

Surely, also, the appeals of these heretics to tradition, may serve as an useful warning; for if tradition could, when unsupported by the warranty of Scripture, have challenged a competent independent authority, the question between the Catholic and the Gnostic would have reduced itself to this sole enquiry, whose traditions were the true and genuine stock. Yet would I never so press this argument, as to appear for a moment to forget the essential difference between the tradition alleged by the heretics, and that which might be claimed by the Church; for the former was avowedly private, while the latter derived its whole authority from its constant and universal reception. Its catholicity was its criterion.

The history of Simon Magus, who (by the uniform testimony of Christian antiquity from the days of Justin) is reported to have been the first to associate the system we have been here considering with a

slight mixture of Christian truth, may well serve to illustrate the views which first suggested the attempt to form this strange and incongruous compound.

It will, I think, materially clear our way towards obtaining a correct understanding of the case, if I premise a few observations on the pretensions to supernatural and magical powers which we know were advanced by this individual, and which have been generally charged against the other Gnostic leaders¹. We know

¹ Lardner, it is true, in the excess of his candour towards the parties accused of heresy, is generally willing to impute these charges of magic to the misrepresentation of their opponents; but a little attention to the character of the philosophical schools to which they belonged, may well induce us to question whether the parties themselves would have been at all grateful for a vindication involving the denial of what they probably themselves considered as the proudest part of their pretensions. Plato himself taught, that by habits of abstract contemplation the mind could ascend to an intimate familiarity with the great first cause, and derive from this intimacy extraordinary powers ‘quod unum dogma,’ as Brucker well observes, ‘satis prodit quam fanatica sit Platonis philosophia, et quod tota enthusiasmo faveat.’ The extravagant notions of theurgy which the later Platonists built on this basis are well known; they are sufficiently illustrated in the marvellous legends circulated concerning Apollonius of

how common such pretensions were in that age, and indeed still remain in these oriental countries. In those days, indeed, the mystical philosophy had closely allied itself with magic ; and its favourite contemplative abstractions were supposed to elevate the soul to a close intercourse with superior spiritual intelligences, and to obtain from that communion a portion of their supernatural power ; with such aspirations the later Platonists were still more proud of their distinction as theurgists, than as philosophers. In such cases, what began in moody fanaticism would probably soon end in interested imposture ; indeed in the moral constitution of our minds, the limits which separate the two stages are seldom very definitely marked.

Simon Magus appears to have been himself a pretender of a similar description ; we read that he astonished the people by his magical arts, and thus obtained so eminent a reputation for high spiritual intercourse and power, as to have acquired the lofty title ἡ δύναμις Θεοῦ ἡ μεγάλη. It seems

Tyana, who it may be remarked is said to have been cotemporary with Simon Magus.

probable, that when he beheld the true miracles of the Christians, he would, under such circumstances, have very naturally been led to consider them as having really obtained a degree of theurgical power, to which he must have been conscious that his own pretensions, however loudly advanced, were in effect vain ; and it is evident that it was his great object to acquire from them by any bribe, a communication of their peculiar secrets, as from more perfect adepts than himself in a common science. The Christ whom they served, and in whose name these mighty works were wrought, he would naturally from his previous impressions have regarded as one of the highest and most mighty Æons, to whom his own system had taught him to look as the sources of the powers he sought.

We are now sufficiently prepared to turn our attention to Irenæus, the great original source of our information concerning the heretical visionaries we have been considering, and, indeed, (the work of Justin against heresies having perished,) the author of the earliest extant refutation of these

opinions. In our own age, indeed, simply to state such fanciful dreams were abundantly sufficient to refute them. We cannot therefore now expect, in a treatise of five books exclusively dedicated to such an object, to find much applicable to the edification of modern times. To such a volume we must, from its very nature, principally refer as to a document of historical curiosity, and be contented with the hope of gleaning a few incidental allusions to topics of more permanent or general interest. But I would observe, that the very circumstance I have mentioned, may well serve to demonstrate to us our intellectual obligations to Christianity ; to the influences, direct or indirect, of whose long-continued teaching, that improvement of the mind of man is principally to be attributed, which now leads it at once to reject absurdities, which in earlier ages required for their confutation laborious argument.

Of Irenæus himself^k, in his early inter-

^k I hardly know whether, as in the case of Homer the critical enquirer, might be now required in the first place

course with Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, I have been already obliged to speak in an earlier Lecture, with reference to the discussions in which he followed the steps of that illustrious instructor ; and I need not now again advert to his anxious endeavours to promote the peace of the Church, when its disturbance was threatened by the Paschal controversy.

We learn from Eusebius, that this disciple of the martyred Polycarp, having in after life passed into Gaul, settled in the Church established apparently by oriental

to vindicate his personal existence, a similar task with respect to Irenæus may not be rendered incumbent on the ecclesiastical critic by the strange sceptical hypothesis of Semler, who, from certain coincidences which he has alleged in their writings, brings forward the singular supposition, that a large proportion of the Fathers of the third century, viz. Justin, Irenæus, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Tertullian, were forgeries emanating from a club of the Christian clerical body, principally established in Rome. If we except the well-known sceptical paradox, that all the classical authors of Greece and Rome were similar forgeries by a school of grammarians in the middle ages, I know not where we shall find another notion so palpably opposed to all internal probability and external evidence.

missionaries at Lyons¹. The Bishop of that Church, Pothinus, having been summoned to martyrdom in the persecution which afflicted the Christians of that district, under the unfeeling and affected pretender to philosophy, Aurelius, Irenæus was called to succeed him in this post, then emphatically that of Christian honour, because of Christian peril. He shrunk neither from its dangers nor its duties, and in the discharge of those duties undertook the composition of the five books which we have now to examine, in refutation of the Gnostic heresies, which from the oriental connections of its commerce had probably been early introduced there.

Although, as I have said, in our age there can be no need of consulting elaborate arguments to confute absurdities which can now only excite a smile or a sigh at human folly or

¹ It is probable that considerable commercial intercourse prevailed between the banks of the Rhone and the shores of Asia Minor. Lugdunum was most favourably situated as an emporium for the traffic on this river, and this will account for the early ecclesiastical connection of the two districts.

human weakness; yet the general principles on which the contest against error is to be carried on, and the quarters from whence the best weapons in such a conflict must be derived, will open out to us questions of far wider application, and more permanent interest. And here we shall find much to demand and repay our careful attention in examining the course pursued by Irenæus. This examination will bear with especial force on our argument respecting the legitimate use of tradition, and its due subordination to the paramount authority of the written Scripture, as the great judicial standard of the faith.

Irenæus repudiates with just indignation^m, that most injurious hypothesis on which the Gnostics, as we have seen, rested their spurious edition of the Christian faith; wherein they dared to misrepresent him, of whom it was foretold that in his mouth should be the law of truth, as if he could have abused his disciples with a double sense, or could have accommodated his public instructions to Jewish prejudices,

while he privately delivered another and indeed contradictory Gospel; which his Apostles (or those at least of their body who had been themselves thoroughly initiated) transmitted in like manner to chosen successors, whence it had descended by continuous private tradition to the Gnostic leaders.

To this pretended private tradition, Irenæus very properly opposes the genuine and catholic tradition of the Church, whose authenticity was sufficiently guaranteed by its unvarying preservation in those Churches which could trace the regular succession of their pastoral ministry, from their Apostolic founders through an interval which at that time little exceeded one century ⁿ. We must feel with how much greater weight such appeals would be made in that early age, and by an author who could refer to the doctrines taught by the beloved disciple of our Lord, as having descended to himself, through but one single intervening link in the chain of com-

ⁿ iii. 3. iv. 45. v. 20.

munication°. Under such circumstances, I repeat, we must all feel that he was most fully justified in appealing, as he did with assured confidence, to the general voice of the Apostolical Churches, as uttering the very language of the Apostles themselves; and I shall with the greatest pleasure transcribe some of his strong, but perfectly just, expressions with regard to the testimony of the Church of that day; convinced that when those expressions are properly explained by what we shall have further to observe, as to the practical character of his own mode of conducting every argument bearing on points of faith, the result can only be to give if possible increased weight

° iii. 3. et Fragmentum Epistolæ ad Florinium. These most interesting juvenile reminiscences, recorded by Irenæus in this Epistle, of the narratives given by his instructor Polycarp of his conversations with St. John, have been already cited in the second Lecture in speaking of that Apostolical Father.

To similar effect we find Irenæus supporting his own assertions by the statement “thus I heard from a certain elder, who had heard it from the associates and disciples of the Apostles themselves,” iv. 27, and 45. and yet on two of these occasions, as we shall presently see, (so very fallacious is the mere oral transmission of facts,) he undoubtedly appears to have been misinformed.

to the supreme authority of the written word.

After a very brief recapitulation of the cardinal points of the Christian faith, Irenæus thus proceeds. “The Church dispersed over the whole world, having as we have said received this preaching and this faith, carefully guardeth it. She dwelleth as it were in one single home, and she believeth this faith as having one soul and one heart; and as possessing but one single mouth she teacheth it. The dialects of the countries may differ, but the power of the tradition is one and the same. Neither do the Churches established in Germany receive or deliver any other doctrine; nor those in Iberia and among the Celts, nor in the East, nor in Egypt and Lybia, nor in the middle regions of the earth. But as the sun of God’s creation is one and the same in all the world, so the preaching of the truth shineth every where, and giveth light to all men that desire to come to the knowledge of that truth^p.”

“ It befitteth not that [the Gnostic] should seek from other quarters [such as his own pretended private tradition] that truth which it is easy to gather from the Church; since the Apostles^p have most fully committed to her as to a rich depository the whole truth, so that every one that is willing may receive from her the cup of life. This is the gate of life, and those who enter by any other are but robbers and thieves. If any question should arise, must it not be proper to consult the Churches of Apostolical foundation, and thence to draw a certain conclusion^q? ”

“ The heretics of necessity tread various

^p The testimony of this Father to the Episcopal government of the Church from the beginning is remarkably explicit, and from his early date, and intimate connection with the immediate successors of the Apostles, particularly valuable; thus he observes, “ we can reckon up those Bishops who were appointed by the Apostles and their successors, all along to our own times.” (iii. 3.) Again, “ We have a list of Bishops in succession, to whom the Apostolic Church was in every place committed.” (iv. 63.) And to the same effect when arguing as to the novelty of heretical opinions, “ All these,” he says, “ are much later than the Bishops to whom the Apostles delivered the Churches.” (v. 20.)

^q iii. 3.

and devious paths of error, following the uncertain and irregular footsteps of false doctrine inconstantly and incoherently; but they who follow the guidance of the Church, tread securely on a broad causeway, encircling the earth, and firmly based on Apostolical tradition, and unity of faith. The Church is the seven-branched candelabrum, supporting the light of Christ. The Church is planted as a paradise in this world, and the Spirit saith, “ye shall eat of every tree of this Paradise,” *that is, of every Scripture of the Lord*. “But ye shall not with a presumptuous mind taste nor touch the tree of knowledge, which the Gnostics claim^r.” Of course, I do not quote this passage, to express any approbation of the last very forced misapplication of the text in Genesis; but because it explicitly states, that the wholesome fruit presented for our nourishment by the Church, (thus splendidly described as the earthly paradise,) all grew on those trees of the Scriptures, whose leaves are indeed for the healing of the nations.

^r v. 20.

We shall find that the practical line pursued by Irenæus himself throughout this work is in strict accordance with this principle.

In illustrating these points, we have first to examine, what was the real character and extent of that fundamental body of Catholic doctrine, which the primitive Church is here asserted thus constantly and universally to have preserved, as the precious legacy of her Apostolic founders. Did it in fact contain any one doctrine whatsoever, or any one explanation of doctrine, which was not stated at least with equal explicitness, and developed with equal fitness, in the written word? Far from it. This authoritative standard, which Irenæus names the *Κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας*, merely comprehends the most concise statement of the great articles of the faith, corresponding entirely in substance with the shorter and simpler creed, which the Church professes to have retained to our own days, as agreeable to the doctrine of the Apostles*.

* These Articles express the belief of the Church.

1. In One God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and all therein.

We must at once then perceive, that this truly genuine apostolical tradition, to which Irenæus so earnestly and so justly endeavoured to recal every one who would profess the name of Christ, does not contain a single word that is not written in the inspired Scripture in characters of light, which he who runs may read. It is indeed

2. In One Jesus Christ, the Son of God, incarnate for our salvation.

3. In the Holy Ghost; who foretold by the Prophets the various dispensations of God, and the advent of Jesus Christ our beloved Lord, his generation from the Virgin, his passion, and his resurrection from the dead; his ascension in the flesh to Heaven, and his coming again from thence in the glory of the Father to consummate all things, and raise again all flesh of the human race; that every knee may bow of things in heaven and earth, and under the earth, and every tongue may confess Christ Jesus as our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father; and that he may make a just judgment on all; dismissing to eternal flames the evil spirits, the apostate, and transgressing angels, together with impious, unjust, lawless, and blasphemous men; but may bestow of his bounty life and incorruption on the just and holy, who keep his commandments and abide in his love; and that he may clothe them with eternal glory.

We may compare this *κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας* with the Creed preserved by Clemens Alexandrinus, see last Lecture; and the *Regula fidei* of Tertullian, see next Lecture.

wholly confined to such cardinal points of Christian doctrine, as every Christian sect of the present day (unless indeed we should include the Socinians in that name) would unhesitatingly subscribe.

If we carry on our enquiry as to the manner in which Irenæus proceeds to fill up this general outline of the faith, we shall find that he derives his materials professedly and exclusively from the stores of the same sacred volume, and that he does not rest a single doctrine on any other support.

I have already in my first Lecture adverted to the forcible and just testimony he has given to the principle, that it was from the beginning designed in the counsels of Providence to replace the preaching of the Apostles by a far firmer foundation than mere oral tradition could possibly afford : *Quod [Evangelium] tunc præconiaverunt, postea vero per Dei voluntatem in Scripturis nobis tradiderunt; fundamentum et columnam fidei nostræ futurum* ^t.

^t l. iii. c. 1. I do not think that the passage so often quoted by the advocates for the high authority of tradition, from the fourth chapter of the same book, is, if candidly

Nor was this a single isolated declaration ; but having built his faith and his hope on this truly Christian basis, he often recurs to the expression of similar sentiments. Thus he remarks, with reference to the study of that sacred word, “ A man of sound, safe, cautious, and truth-loving mind will eagerly meditate on all those things which God hath subjected to our knowledge, and placed within our reach. In these pursuits he will advance, rendering the acquisition of this knowledge easy to himself by daily exercise ; for all these truths are placed beneath our power of sight,

weighed, at all inconsistent with the principles I would deduce from the above statement. Irenæus there argues, that “ even if the Apostles had not bequeathed to us the Scriptures ; it must still have been our duty to follow the doctrines they had orally delivered to the Churches founded by them.” And he confirms this maxim by the example of many nations of converted barbarians, “ who had the Gospel written in their hearts without paper and ink ; and although they remain barbarians in speech, have yet become through faith truly wise in sentiments and morals, and instructed so as to please their God.” But surely the strictest Protestant would never scruple to employ language equally strong, with regard to the case of the illiterate, who have received the Gospel from faithful instructors.

being clearly and unequivocally discernible by the simple perusal of the divine Scriptures "."

Again, in another passage, with exactly the same spirit, he refers to the same inspired documents as the great safeguard against all heretical error; and assures his readers in express terms, that by employing the proofs derived from a general survey of the Scriptures, they would, as he had shewn by his own example, be always able with ease to overturn the perverted explanations which the heretics might have endeavoured to affix to particular passages *.

He, indeed, more than once expressly asserts, that the Holy Spirit, foreseeing the errors which would arise, designedly dic-

* The original passage, l. ii. c. 46. p. 171. is conceived in the strongest terms, and after a few sentences, followed up by this general statement: Cum itaque universæ Scripturæ Prophetiæ et Evangelicæ in aperto sint, et sine ambiguitate, et similiter ab omnibus audiri possint. ii. 46. p. 172.

* Utens etiam his ostensionibus quæ sunt ex Scripturis, facile evertis, quemadmodum demonstravimus, omnes eas quæ postea afflictæ sunt hæreticarum sententias. v. 14. p. 422.

tated many texts, with a particular view to guard against them^y.

It is true indeed that he advises, and surely most properly advises, the biblical student, if he should find any difficulty arise, carefully to consult the pastors of the Church, as the appointed guardians of the Apostolical faith^z; but the very source to which he ascribed the authority they might thus justly claim, was their own constant and stedfast adherence to the word of God alone^a.

We shall find the practice of Irenæus, in the conduct of the controversy which he had himself undertaken, throughout consistent with the spirit of the above declarations. His refutations are ever built on the words of Scripture as their only secure foundation, and it would be impossible for

^y Prævidens Spiritus Sanctus depravatores, et præmuniens contra fraudulentiam eorum; per Matthæum ait . . . &c. iii. 18. p. 239.

^z Post deinde, et omnis sermo ei constabit, si et Scripturam diligenter legerit apud eos qui in ecclesiâ sunt Presbyteri, apud quos est Apostolica doctrina quemadmodum demonstravimus. iv. 52. p. 355.

^a Nos autem unum et solum verum Deum doctorem sequentes, et *regulam veritatis habentes ejus sermones*, de iisdem semper eadem dicimus omnes. iv. 69. p. 368.

the best biblical divine of the present day, to quote more largely or more familiarly every portion of the inspired volume. When we consider that he must have written within a century of the period when that volume was closed, we must attach the very highest importance to the satisfactory testimony he thus affords, of the undoubted reception by the universal Church, at that early date, of every book of the present canon, with the very trifling possible exception of six of the minor Epistles ; and that exception amounts only to the negative fact of the absence of any very certain citations ; and cannot therefore warrant the positive inference of suspicion, still less of rejection^b.

^b Irenæus quotes all the four Gospels, alleging reasons (fanciful enough) why there can be only four. (See note *infra*.) He also largely cites all the Epistles of St. Paul, excepting that to Philemon, which he may well have passed over from its brevity. He has many references to the Epistle to the Hebrews, though he does not distinctly ascribe it to St. Paul. We also find many and certain quotations from 1 Peter, 1 and 2 John, also the Apocalypse ; but none occur from the third Epistle of John, the second of Peter, and those of James and Jude.

Irenæus thus cites more than 900 texts from the New Testament; and as these citations always accord in substance, and generally in the very letter^c, with the readings still preserved, so extensive a testimony goes very far to prove not only the authenticity of the books in general, but even the genuineness of our text in the detail. I need not observe, how much is thus added to the comparatively sparing references of the earlier Fathers, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin.

^c Some instances have been cited by Semler and others, in which Irenæus appears to have followed the readings of the Italic School of MSS. rather than the more authentic Greek. The most important of these occurs in the Acts, xv. 20, and 29. in the regulations prescribed to the Gentile converts, as proposed by St. James, and adopted by the Council of Jerusalem; in these as cited p. 232, Irenæus, or rather his Latin translator, omit ἀπὸ τοῦ πνικτοῦ from among the prohibitions, and add the positive precept, quæcunque nolunt sibi fieri aliis ne faciant. Clemens Alexandrinus and Cyprian concur in this reading, which is also exhibited in the Codex Bezae preserved at Cambridge, both as to the omission and the addition καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλωσιν ἑαυτοῖς γένησθαι ἑτέροις μὴ ποιεῖν, but this MS. is very commonly accused of Latinizing.

We shall mostly find the use he makes of these rich stores of biblical knowledge, most favourably distinguished from the practice of the Alexandrian Fathers, (whom we last considered,) by the soundness of his application, and the judgment and sobriety of the rules of interpretation which he generally follows. We cannot indeed deny, that occasionally we meet with some forced accommodations of particular passages to purposes very remote from their original intention; but still we may observe, not in vindication indeed, but in extenuation, that when the mind is overflowing with the language of Scripture, it is difficult, even for a far more exact writer than Irenæus, to guard himself from being led into the introduction of texts, suggested merely by verbal parallelisms, and which can at best only form ornamental illustrations, and never essential portions of the argument. But although he was not happy enough entirely to escape the perverted taste for fanciful and allegorical interpretation, which so greatly injured the ecclesiastical writings of this

age, his offences are comparatively rare ; and he occasionally lays down very good advice, and excellent rules for the exposition of holy writ.

Thus he instructs us^d to seek a correct explanation of the more obscure and figurative passages of Scripture, by comparing them with those which are clear and unambiguous ; “ for thus ” (as he observes) “ the general body of scriptural truth, secured by the harmonious adaptation of its several parts, will remain in its integrity, and free from all repugnancy. But if we should connect these more dark and abstruse portions with parabolical and figurative interpretations, such as every one may invent after his own fancy, there can be no certain standard of truth ; and the result must be as many conflicting expositions as there are expositors ; the fabric will never be securely based on the firm and solid rock, but piled up on the treacherous foundation of the drifting sand, and its subversion must be proportionably rapid and easy.”

In the same book he strongly exposes^e

^d ii. 46. p. 172.

^e ii. 45. p. 170.

the folly evinced by the Gnostics, and by Clemens Alexandrinus, in seeking to deduce from various passages of holy writ, vain, idle, and absurd questions concerning numerical mysteries; instead of endeavouring to profit by the edification of the plain sense, and thus growing in the love of God and man.

When he himself appears strongly tempted to expatiate on the more obscure passages in the prophetic visions of Daniel and the Apocalypse, concerning the power of Antichrist, and the mystical number of the beast, he most prudently checks his curiosity as to unfulfilled prophecy, by the very just remark *ἀσφαλέστερον καὶ ἀκινδυνότερον τὸ περιμένειν τὴν ἔκβασιν τῆς προφητείας, ἢ τὸ καταστοχάζεσθαι καὶ καταμαντεύεσθαι ὀνόματος*. It is far less dangerous and fallacious to await the event of prophecy, than conjecturally to aim at divination from a name^f. To the same effect

^f v. 30. p. 448. He therefore modestly concludes, that as many names, e. g. ΕΥΑΝΘΑΣ, ΛΑΤΕΙΝΟΣ, might be imagined capable of satisfying the number 166, every proposed solution must be liable to error; and that if it

we read in another passage^g, *πᾶσα γὰρ προφητεία πρὸ τῆς ἐκβασέως αἰνιγματὶ ἐστὶ καὶ ἀντιλογία τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἀποβῇ τὸ προφητευθὲν, τότε τῆς ἀκριβεστάτης ἐπιτύχει ἐξηγήσεως.*

I may here also mention the caution, no less wise than modest, with which Irenæus sums up his explanation of those texts, in which Christ speaks of his own economical subordination (as it is termed) to the Father; such as Mark xiii. 32. Here he

had been expedient to communicate the knowledge sought to the age in which he lived, St. John, who had died less than a century before, would undoubtedly himself have plainly revealed it. Yet we find him very fancifully himself remarking on the number 666, that it may be thus made up. Noah was 600 years old at the time of the deluge, and the dimensions of the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar were 60 cubits in height, and six in breadth: thus $600 + 60 + 6 = 666$. In the same spirit in exposing the absurdities of the numerical mysteries on which the Gnostics were so fond of dwelling, and of which, as we have seen, the principle was fully countenanced by Clemens Alexandrinus, he justly argues, that these numerical coincidences must ever remain perfectly inconclusive, because whatever number may be selected, it will always be abundantly easy for any fanciful speculator to find many instances of such coincidences. ii. 42. p. 166.

^g iv. 43. p. 343.

earnestly warns us to remember, that as yet we know in part only; and to resign all such questions, as far transcending our highest faculties, to the God whose secret things we must ever be unable to search out. “*Ne forte quærentes altitudinem Patris investigare, in tantum periculum incidamus uti quæramus an super Deum, alter sit Deus^b.*”

His general argument as to such scriptural difficulties is sound and excellent, “*If,*” says he, “*we are unable to discover full solutions of every question which may be proposed as to the Scriptures, we may well yield such mysteries to the God who has made us; most surely convinced, that the Scriptures must themselves be perfect, seeing that they are dictated by his own word and Spirit. But we who are the lowest creatures of that word and Spirit, cannot be surprised to find ourselves destitute of the faculties requisite for the full comprehension of his mysteries. Nor can it seem strange that we should remain subject to this ignorance as to spiritual and heavenly*

^b ii. 49. 178.

things, which can only be known to us by Revelation; since even of the very objects which are before our feet, I mean the natural works of creation which are subject to our touch and sight, and which are ever with us, there are many things which escape our science, and which we can only refer to God as to the great first causeⁱ.”

To proceed from these general principles, to some examples of their particular application. Among the few topics of the Gnostic controversy, which can be said to have any bearing on the theology of the present day, we may notice the attempts, in which the modern Deist would readily follow these ancient heretics, to stigmatize the law of the Old Testament as altogether imperfect and unworthy of the good God, and at variance with the purer moral precepts of Christianity. In his answer, which occupies much of his fourth book, Irenæus principally confines his attention to the latter

ⁱ ii. 47. p. 173. Irenæus adds some examples to illustrate this just principle; but we cannot be surprised in the then state of natural science to find these any thing but happily chosen.

point, the alleged opposition between the Law and the Gospel. His replies to this objection will very generally be found satisfactory; but a short specimen given in an abridged form may suffice to illustrate their general character. “ When our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount, made his observations on the seventh and eighth Commandments, the spirit of these was not to contradict or abrogate, but to fulfil and to extend. For clearly, if he had intended to contradict the Law, he would then have enjoined his disciples to the performance of the very deeds which it prohibits; but far from this, he here requires from every one that would be his disciple, not only most strictly to abstain from the commission of these outward acts themselves, but to keep in check the very first secret desires of the heart which might lead to them. The law as ordained for servants, and forming merely a preparatory instruction for the soul, requires in the first place only a bodily service; but the Word having accomplished the deliverance of the soul, seeks, by first acting on that governing principle, effectually to purify its instru-

ment the body; and the bonds of legal servitude are thus taken away, that men without bonds may yield a willing obedience to God. Yet the promulgation of these decrees of liberty does but increase our subjection to our King and Liberator; that we may not by falling away shew ourselves altogether unworthy of his goodness. For *sons* surely owe no less of piety and obedience to the head of the family, though *sons* have far higher confidence than *servants*; and the faithful works of liberty are indeed more great and more noble, than the constrained submission of slaves^k."

To the same effect he dilates on many other of the Gospel precepts, of enlarged liberality, benevolence, forgiveness of injuries, and the love of enemies; and shews them in every instance to be not the contradiction, but the extension and more spiritual developement, of the very same principles inculcated in a more elementary form under the elder law.

He proceeds very eloquently to argue, that both dispensations throughout dis-

^k iv. 27. p. 313.

played the most manifest evidence, that they proceeded from the same God of goodness and love. For his free love in the beginning created Adam, not as though he could be in aught profited by any weak services which man could render, but only that he might have an object of his own unrequited bounty; and from the very same love the Son left the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, not to require our homage, but to bestow on us salvation; for though God is entirely independent on man, man is entirely dependent on God, and therefore saith the Lord, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you¹.”

I can hardly select a more characteristic example of the style of argument and sentiments of this Father, than that portion of his fifth book^m, in which he is vindicating the doctrine of the resurrection of the body from the objections of the Gnostics; whose fundamental tenet of the essential corruption of matter, made them utterly revolt from the idea, that it could in any manner participate in the glory, which, according to

¹ iv. 28. p. 315.

^m v. 9.

their views awaited the disembodied spirit. They boldly asserted that St. Paul entirely agreed with them in this, when he declaresⁿ, that ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’ Irenæus would obviate any such difficulty, by distinguishing between the corrupt and unrenewed state of our whole nature, and that which it assumes when renovated by the Holy Spirit of God. St. Paul, he says, here speaks of it in its former state, when the soul being destitute of spiritual life, the flesh is also dead and devoid of any true vital principle, and the blood of life is altogether irrational, and spilt as water on the ground. In this state indeed he acknowledges that flesh and blood cannot inherit the heavenly kingdom. But he conceived, that the infusion of the Spirit of God into the soul imparted to that higher principle such new powers, as to absorb, as it were, the infirmity of the flesh, and to elevate and transform it to an higher nature; *ubi autem est Spiritus Patris, Caro a Spiritu possessa oblita quidem sui, qualitatem autem Spiritus*

ⁿ 1 Cor. xv.

assumens, conformis facta est Verbo Dei; and in this state, the hope which nature might seem to have denied, was bestowed by grace. And as the wild olive, if it be engrafted in the good olive, becomes partaker of its richness, its quality though not its essence being changed, so it assumes a fruitfulness not its own; and although it must otherwise have perished in its wild and barren state, it thus becomes capable of being transplanted into the Paradise of God°. Even so, those who are in the flesh cannot please God; but you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwelleth in you; the flesh indeed is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit is life on account of righteousness; and if his Spirit, which raised Jesus from the dead, abide in you, he who so raised him shall in like manner quicken your mortal bodies by his indwelling Spirit. In all these passages it is evident, that by the flesh St. Paul clearly denotes the works of the flesh^p, which he enumerates^q, and states, they who do such things, walk according to the

^o v. 10.^p v. 11.^q Rom. viii. 9.

flesh, and cannot possibly live to God ; and adds, ‘ such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are justified, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.’ We are thus washed not from the substance of our corporeal nature, not from the image in which we were created, but from our former vain conversation ; and in those members in which we were before perishing, working the works of corruption ; in the very same we are now quickened, working the works of the Spirit ; for as the flesh is capable of corruption, so also is it of incorruption ; as of death, so also of life. ‘ We must therefore put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him that created him. But this renewal changeth not the original substance of our nature ; for, as the Apostle saith, ‘ when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach his Gospel to the Gentiles,’ he who then preached the

Gospel was not another, but the same individual, who, in his former ignorance persecuted the faith ; just as the blind, who received sight from our Lord, retained the substance of their eyes unchanged, though their blindness was removed.”

I have made this extract, which, though greatly compressed and abridged from the original, still extends to a greater length than I have usually thought expedient in such a general survey, in order that I might convey a more faithful impression of the style of Irenæus, and his extreme copiousness of Scripture illustration. It is also valuable as shewing the delight with which he reverted to those passages of St. Paul's writings which peculiarly inculcate the doctrines of grace, and the necessity of spiritual renovation. When, indeed, he extends the blessings of that renovation to the whole of our compound natures, and considers the associated flesh as so intimately participating in the benefits of its spiritual tenant, some persons may perhaps be led to tax him with the same tendency to views too nearly bor-

dering on materialism, which have often been objected to many of the Fathers ; but it may fairly be questioned, whether, in the present state of our metaphysical science, we really know enough either of matter or spirit, or their relations, to presume to press such an objection very closely.

It is needless to add, that we find in Irenæus the most satisfactory attestations to the great doctrines of the proper divinity of Christ ^t, and his complete assumption of our nature ^u. We are not here, as in the Alexandrian Fathers, perplexed by attempts to explain the manner of the existence of these mysterious truths in philosophical phraseology; but they are expressed, as they ever should be, in the simplicity of scriptural statement, and with a view to their practical application. Thus, the divinity of our Saviour is laid down as the sure foundation of the confidence of our hope, that having thus been admitted into union with the immortal God, we shall ourselves also receive immortality through him. And again, his remission of guilt to the paralytic,

^t iii. 21. v. 10.

^u iii. 20, 24, 32, 33.

is urged as the most forcible, as it is the most affecting, argument of his possessing the power which belongeth unto God alone.

The features which distinguished the miracles of our Lord, are forcibly shewn to be in the strongest contrast with the pretended wonders of the Gnostic theurgists; and the argument will remind us of those so forcibly employed by the author of the Criterion. These impostors, we are told, after a long and elaborate preparatory machinery of magical forms and incantations, produced only passing appearances, as fleeting as fallacious; that abode not to endure scrutiny, but vanished with a single drop of the Clepsydra; but Christ performed his mighty works, not by mystical invocations of dæmons, but by simple prayers to the Father; and the effects he wrought were permanent and decided; the complete removal of the most incurable disorders, and the raising the dead to a life prolonged for many years*.

Irenæus entirely concurred with the generality of the Fathers in his horror

* ii. 57. p. 188.

of the Stoical fatalism; and maintained the *Αὐτεξούσιον* as strongly as any of the Platonic school; attributing the introduction of evil to our abuse of the power of free will. He has dedicated the conclusion of his third book exclusively to this subject. His views concerning it have of course been censured by those of opposite opinions; but I cannot myself perceive, that on this difficult and delicate subject he has ever expressed himself so incautiously as at all to call in question the great doctrines of grace; and it must be remembered, that Augustine has himself cited his authority, in opposition to the errors of Pelagius.

It has been far more gratifying to me to dwell on so many excellencies, than to point out the defects inseparable from human and uninspired composition; and which must ever sufficiently warn us to refrain from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, as the guide of our faith. But lest just respect should be exaggerated into superstitious veneration; lest, instead of taking sweet counsel with such writers, as Christian friends in the house of the Lord, we elevate

them into the oracular authorities of that house; it becomes painfully incumbent to point out distinctly the grounds which must demonstrate their incompetency for such a station; a station indeed from which Irenæus himself would have altogether shrunk, as not only offensive to his modesty, but directly opposed to all his own sentiments and principles.

On such grounds then, it should be frankly stated, that, notwithstanding his far greater caution, Irenæus himself occasionally lapses into somewhat of the same license of allegorical interpretation, which we have had so often cause to lament in many other Fathers; and we must be especially pained to find him sanctioning that most unfounded principle, which has frequently led to the very offensive and revolting conclusions, that the crimes recorded of the Patriarchs are all typical, and to be received only in a figurative sense^u. Would that Irenæus had always remembered his own more just application of these humbling records of human weak-

^u iv. 51. See also p. 34, 78, 156.

ness, as demonstrating the universal need of a Saviour*.

* iv. 45. It may be necessary in this note to specify some examples of the kind generally alluded to in the text. He has given (v. 23.) a most fanciful and mystical account of the circumstances of Adam's temptation and fall; this he supposes to have taken place on the sixth day (Friday); thus the sentence of death was incurred by the first Adam, on the very same day that it was removed by the death of the second Adam on the cross. This also occurs in Justin's Dialogue. He has also given extremely fanciful typical applications to almost all the circumstances of Jacob's History. (iv. 38.) He likewise deduces a singular type from the circumstance recorded 2 Kings vi. 6. concerning Elisha, when he recovered the blade of the axe which, while the Prophets were hewing wood for the tabernacle, had been struck off on the banks of the Jordan, and sunk in the waters; but which was regained by throwing in a stick, which assumed the position of a handle, and buoyed it up. This axe, says Irenæus, represents the word of God; (Jer. xxiii. 29.) the axe was lost in felling the *wood*, as God's word was lost to us through the *wood* of the forbidden tree, and was recovered by the *wood* of the cross. Tertullian exactly copies Irenæus in his treatise against the Jews; and Justin in his Dialogue had before given a similar application of the passage, but less detailed. Irenæus (v. 17.) has a very fanciful allegorization of the Levitical distinction concerning the ruminant and cloven-hoofed animals; their *double cloven* hoof, which gave *firmness* to their steps, he considers as typifying the *steadfastness* of the Christian's faith in the *two* divine Persons of the Father and the Son, and their *rumination*, his *recollection* and *meditation* of the word of God. The Jews, though they pos-

Although he has some expressions which seem to imply that he concurred with Justin

sessed the latter, wanted the former. In this Irenæus partly follows the forged Epistle of the Pseudo Barnabas; which however explains the cloven hoof somewhat differently, as representing believers while living in one world, yet having their conversation in another, and thus as it were resting their footsteps on a double foundation. In l. iii. c. 10. Irenæus explains the typical meaning he attached to the presents offered by the Magi to Christ. In this he agrees with Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen. Sedulius has thrown this exposition into a distich.

Aurea nascenti fuderunt munera Regi

Thura dedere Deo, Myrrham tribuere Sepulcro.

And Jerome quotes the Presbyter Irenæus as having summed them up in a single line ;

Thus, Aurum, Myrrham; Regique, Hominique, Deoque.

Irenæus also, with many other of the Fathers, held the four Evangelists to be typified by the four beasts, Rev. iv. 7. 1. That like the lion represented St. John, from his courageous assertions of Christ's divinity. 2. The calf designates Luke, because his Gospel begins with the sacrifice of Zachariah, when the fatted calf was preparing for slaughter, to welcome the return of the prodigal. 3. That like a man represents Matthew, because he began his Gospel with the genealogy of Christ, according to his human nature. 4. Mark is designated by the eagle, because he commences with the words of prophecy winged from heaven by the eagle strength of the Holy Spirit. Irenæus, I believe, was the first inventor of this very forced interpretation, but it afterwards became very popular. A similar interpretation is thus versified by Sedulius, but with a different application of the typical beasts :

and so many of the subsequent Fathers, in their unhappy dæmonological hypothesis, of the lapse of the angels seduced by the daughters of men, yet he alludes to it so very slightly and obscurely, that it is clear his judgment shrank from dwelling on such a subject^y.

In conclusion of the fifth book^z, Irenæus

Hoc Matthæus agens, hominem generaliter implet,
 Marcus ut alta fremit Vox per deserta leonis,
 Jura Sacerdotis Lucas tenet ore juveni.

More volans aquilæ verbo petit astra Johannes.

^y iv. 70. p. 374. He only says, “Noah’s flood was brought in to extinguish a most wicked race of men, who could no longer bear fruit to God, because the transgressing angels had become intermixed with them.”

^z v. 28 to end. He conceived that the world was to last in its present state for 6,000 years from its creation; viz. as many Millenia, as there had been days occupied in that creative work. Towards the close of these should occur the tribulations of the last times, which he conceived to have commenced in his own days, referring to the persecutions as a proof. He expected that the dissolution of the Roman empire, and its subdivision into the kingdoms typified by the ten horns, would shortly ensue, and usher in the power of Anti-Christ and the beast; this should endure three years and six months, and then Christ should descend, and cast them into the fiery lake, and himself reign through the Sabbatical Millenium of rest, which was to succeed the six previous Millenaries of labour and strife. Those who had part in the first

fully avows his belief in the earthly Millennium, and the two resurrections; he declares his conviction, that the prophetical passages applied to these subjects were altogether incapable of a figurative interpretation. Nor did he think they would more justly admit of being explained with reference to the final glories of the heavenly kingdom. Yet he treats these subjects quite in the tone of the most moderate and sober writers, who have ever adopted similar views; and we know that they have been embraced by many, both pious and able men, even in our own days.

Less excusable, however, we must, I fear, consider the tone of the comparison which Irenæus institutes between Eve and the Virgin Mary, and to which he returns on

resurrection should at the commencement of this happy period arise, and together with Abraham and his faithful seed the true Church, should in the new Jerusalem reign over the lands, from Euphrates to the river of Egypt.

We have, however, already noticed the modest and prudent caution with which in the midst of these speculations, to which the temper of his mind naturally inclined him, he checked himself by the recollection, that it was not for man to speak positively on the subject of unfulfilled prophecy.

two occasions^a. In the first of these passages he observes, “As Eve by her disobedience became the cause of death to herself and the whole human race; so Mary the obedient Virgin, yet *habens prædestinatum Virum*, became the cause of salvation to herself and all mankind.” And returning to the subject in another book, he tells us, “that as Eve was seduced to fly from God, so was Mary persuaded to obey God. And thus the Virgin Mary became the advocate of the Virgin Eve.” Now although we readily acknowledge, that the Christian is alike bound by duty and feeling with the highest respect to call that holy Virgin blessed among women; yet assuredly never has the true Church learnt to look to her obedience as the meritorious cause of man’s salvation; never can she recognize her as the advocate of sinners.

Such instances of forced misinterpretations, questionable speculations, and early corruptions, even in a Father, the sober quality of whose judgment, as we have seen,

^a iii. 33. p. 200. and v. 19. p. 429.

so generally deserves our commendation, may well shew us how little safe it is to rely on so treacherous a conveyance as human tradition, for the preservation of divine truth.

It has been often and very justly remarked, that the only two instances in which he himself professes to depend for any of the facts he has mentioned on any other than scriptural authority, are both so palpably erroneous, as to afford the most convincing proof, how very little reliance can be placed on any traditional basis.

In the first of these instances^b, Irenæus, expressly referring to those who professed to have received it from St. John, asserts, that the ministry of Christ was prolonged for some twenty years after his baptism, and that he remained on earth till the time of Trajan, not having been crucified until nearly his fiftieth year; he also infers that this must have been about his age from the observation of the Jews, “Thou art not yet fifty years old.” He further argues, that thus it became him who came to save

^b ii. 39.

every age, himself to participate in each successive condition of our ordinary life, in its more advanced as well as in its earlier stages ; and he thinks it dishonouring him to conceive that he, our great Teacher, could have been deprived of its senior and more venerable portion, and that which was regarded as alone competent to the office of an instructor. Surely a weaker argument than the above cannot well be imagined^c.

It is probable, that the traditional authority which thus misled him, was derived through Papias, whose extreme imbecility of judgment Eusebius has strongly exposed, and whom yet Irenæus followed in his Millenarian speculations.

The other instance in which, as I have said, Irenæus appears to have been betrayed into a palpable misstatement by relying on oral tradition, relates to those very speculations, and is avowedly borrowed from the same Papias. In this, a strange prophecy, evidently of Rabbinical fabrication, concerning the extraordinary fertility of the Millennial period, is attributed, in violation of

^c ii. 40.

every mark of internal evidence and probability, to the lips of our divine Lord^d.

But such assuredly are not the topics which I could wish to leave, as forming the closing impression of the present Lecture. Where so much matter of useful application may by a judicious and candid examination be found, it were an employment little profitable to the mental discipline, either of preacher or hearers, to pause in gleaning defects ; necessarily magnified beyond their real proportion by collective statement, and thus made to assume the appearance of general samples, whereas they are in fact only rare exceptions.

In reverting then to the subjects which have thus engaged our attention, now for the first time called to those unhappy

^d v. 33. p. 454. The prophecy is as follows : Venient dies in quibus vineæ nascentur, singulæ decem millia palmitum habentes, et in unâ palmite dena millia brachiorum, et in uno brachio dena millia flagellorum, et in unoquoque flagello dena millia botrum, et in unoquoque botro dena millia acinorum ; et unumquodque acinum expressum dabit viginti quinque metretas vini ; et cum apprehenderit aliquis sanctorum botrum, alius clamabit : Botrus ego melior sum, Me Sume, et per me Dominum benedic.

divisions, which so early began to rend what should have been the seamless vest of Christ ; the most profitable and appropriate concluding topic which can be pressed on our reflection, seems to me presented by the enquiry, how far we can apply the criteria of the true faith which we have been now considering, to the present circumstances of the Church.

The marks of the true Church, which may be deduced from the lofty descriptions above quoted from this Father with reference to that Catholic body as it appeared in his eyes, are, I think, such as will recommend themselves to our adoption, not merely from the sanction of his authority, but from the deliberate approval of our own best judgment. May we not then fairly enquire, if Irenæus had been required to select from among the Christian bodies of the present day that which most evidently displayed the features in his esteem characteristic of the true Church, in what direction it may seem probable to us that the choice of his judgment would have been determined ?

Let us suppose then, that among these bodies he had found one, which without elevating the externals of form to an undue equality with the essentials of faith, yet should herself constantly and stedfastly retain the government and discipline, which she is assured on the fullest evidence have descended from the Apostolic age. While she also with equal faithfulness preserved what must be considered as of infinitely greater importance, the true Apostolical succession of the doctrine once delivered to the saints; one which might thus well claim in general application to herself, the eulogium pronounced by Gregory of Nazianzen on Athanasius. *Ἐπὶ τὸν Μάρκου θρόνον ἀνάγεται, οὐκ ἦττον τῆς Εὐσεβείας, ἢ τῆς προεδρίας διάδοχος. Τῇ μὲν γὰρ πολλοστὸς ἀπ' ἐκείνου, τῇ δὲ εὐθὺς μετ' ἑκείνου εὐρίσκεται, ἣν δὲ καὶ κύριως ὑπολήπτειν διαδοχὴν. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ ὁμόγνωμον καὶ ὁμόθρονον, τὸ δὲ ἀντίδοξον καὶ ἀντίθρονον^ε.* Approving herself as a Church placed in the seat of the Apostles, not less as the successor of their piety than of their authority; distant indeed in time, but directly

^ε Orat. 21. (Paris. p. 390.) in laudibus Athanasii.

connected with them in that religious faith which constitutes the true idea of their succession; for in this respect unity of sentiment is unity of seat, and separation from the former must be separation from the latter. Had Irenæus thus found a Church such as he himself described, offering to her members those wholesome fruits of doctrine, which she had herself gathered from the sacred tree of God's word; had he found her freely offering of that fruit to all; and with him maintaining that the Scripture was the sole pillar and foundation of the faith, and to be unreservedly and universally communicated, because in all essentials clear and unambiguous; while yet if to the weak any difficulty should arise, she gratuitously offered the assisting instruction of a learned ministry, devoting its studies to this very end; at the same time acknowledging that God was the sole teacher, and claiming authority exclusively from its own fidelity to his revealed word.

If Irenæus had found still on earth a Church possessing all these features, would

he have failed to recognize that which he had himself delineated; and which of these features would he not have found in the Communion of the Church of England?

LECTURE VI.

REV. iv. 13, 14.

*I know thy works, and that thou holdest fast my name ; but
I have a few things against thee .*

THE course pursued in these Lectures will next conduct us to the earliest, and in many respects most important, of the Latin Fathers, Tertullian. Vincentius Lirinensis indeed, in drawing a parallel between Origen and him, observes, *Sicut ille apud Græcos ita hic apud Latinos nostrorum omnium facile princeps judicandus est*^a. He praises him in the highest terms for universality of acquirement, for native vigour of intellect, and for cogency of argument ; and well describes the pithy sententiousness so characteristic of his style, *cujus quot pene verba, tot sententiæ*. Yet he is constrained to conclude this panegyric by

^a Vincentius Lirinensis, cap. xvii.

the admission, that the very party so eminently gifted in himself, had still been seduced by the fanatical pretensions of Montanus to depart so widely from the Catholic faith, that his writings, like those of Origen, were no less a source of temptation than of edification to the Church; and he therefore fully concurs in the judgment of Hilary, “*Sequenti errore detraxit scriptis probabilibus auctoritatem.*” Lactantius sketches his literary character much more briefly, and dwells more severely on the African harshness of his very powerful but semi-barbarous diction. “*Omni genere literarum peritus; sed in eloquendo parum facilis, et minus comptus, et multum obscurus fuit^b.*”

Tertullian was a native of Africa, being the son of a centurion of one of the proconsular legions stationed in that province. His birth must be probably dated between 170 and 180. In his youth, as we may gather from his own words, he had treated with bitter scorn the faith he afterwards embraced with ardent devotion. “*Hæc*

^b Lactantii Divin. Institut. lib. v. cap. 1.

nos et risimus aliquando, de vestris fuimus^c.” Of his life before his conversion he himself speaks severely; “ Præstantiam in delictis meam agnosco, peccator omnium notarum^d;” but the expressions of an awakened conscience, and of a heart that knoweth its own bitterness, must not be misconstrued as implying any excess of immorality above the general state of the unconverted. It is much to be regretted, that no notice has been preserved of the circumstances which effected the conversion of a person so remarkable. After he had embraced the faith, he devoted himself to the ministry, but appears never to have attained any higher grade than the order of Presbyter; and his lapse into the errors of Montanism has been sometimes ascribed to disappointed ambition; but for this imputation there does not appear any sufficient foundation. The ardent temperament of his disposition may be justly described as a fruit perfectly congenial to the burning climate of his natal soil; for no one was ever more distinguished by the *perfervidum ingenium*;

^c Apol. 18.^d De Pœnit.

and his confessions in the tract *De Patientia* fully shew how well he was aware of the characteristic constitution of his own mind. To this temper we must attribute much, both of his merits and defects. Hence the high courage and unbending principle of his conduct, and the point, force, and nervous though coarse eloquence, which give so lively a vigour to his style. But hence also an hot and intemperate zeal, altogether refusing the reins of that Christian sobriety of judgment, which a Paul scrupled not to commend and to practise; and hence an ill-regulated enthusiasm, prompt to rush with easy credulity into extravagant fanaticism.

His fall into the errors of the Montanists must, in its general features, be well known to every one at all acquainted with ecclesiastical history. But it may not be amiss to say a few words as to the exact character of that sect, with which his name is so intimately associated. Montanus appears to have been far more a fanatic than an impostor. He believed that the Charismata of the Spirit still remained with the

Church, and that the revelations vouchsafed to himself in particular were so abundant, as to constitute him a peculiar depository of the influences of the Paraclete. He imagined himself the appointed instrument for carrying to higher degrees of purity and perfection the doctrines already indeed partially revealed through the Apostles; yet by their preaching only so far made known as the world was able to bear at the first introduction of the new faith; but now destined to receive their perfect development from the new prophecy which it was his own high commission to proclaim.

Such pretensions Tertullian at first very properly rejected as inadmissible, and in his general treatise on heresies justly stigmatizes them as blasphemous^e. Yet this very blasphemous theory he himself afterwards fully embraced, and became one of its most strenuous advocates. In a later treatise he assures us, that religion had

^e De Præscript. Hær. cap. 52. ed. Seml. tom. ii. p. 77. Hi habent aliam blasphemiam quia dicunt Paracletum plura in Montano dixisse quam Christum in Evangelio protulisse, nec tantum plura, sed etiam meliora atque majora.

many successive stages of growth; in its embryo state it consisted merely in the natural apprehension of a Deity; it advanced to infancy by the Mosaic law, and the Prophets; the dispensation of the Gospel formed its youthful developement; and it ripened into full maturity through these new revelations of the Paraclete^f.

Yet we must remember, that these new revelations were represented only as carrying out to their full and designed extent the principles already indicated in the Gospel; and to derive all their authority (as is expressly stated in the passage to which I have referred) from the Spirit, who spake not of himself, but as commissioned by Christ. This fanatical delusion did not

^f De Virg. Vel. cap. 1. (tom. iii. p. 3.) *Justitia primo fuit in rudimentis, Natura Deum metuens; de hinc per Evangelium efferbuit in Juventutem; Nunc per Paracletum componitur in maturitatem. Hic erit solus a Christo magister dicendus et verendus, non enim a se loquitur, sed quæ mandantur a Christo. This new revelation was represented as necessary; "Ut quoniam humana mediocritas omnia semel capere non poteret, paulatim dirigeretur et ordinaretur et ad perfectum perduceretur, disciplinâ ab illo vicario Domini Spiritu Sancto."* Ibid. p. 2.

therefore, in any fundamental point, contravene the essential doctrines of Christianity; unless indeed in its arrogant and almost blasphemous pretensions to add to a system, once for all finally completed, and to *improve* that which was already the perfect work of God.

Tertullian, therefore, at the same time that he eagerly embraced this unwarrantable supplement to the faith once delivered, still firmly adhered to all the great truths proposed by the Church, in her compendious *regula fidei*^g; which in this very chapter he recites, declaring that he still held this foundation to be in itself *sola, immobilis, irreformabilis*.

The additions introduced by the Montanists related principally to points of moral discipline, on which they endeavoured to impress the strictest characters of the sternest asceticism. They enjoined an extravagant austerity of fasts. They absolutely prohibited second marriages, and tolerated rather than sanctioned any departure from what they considered the more perfect state of celibacy. In all

^g Ibid. p. 2.

these particulars, and in the fond faith with which they dwelt on their visions of Millennial glories, they did but agree with enthusiasts in general; and their only distinguishing peculiarity appears to have consisted in their pretension to a specific and authoritative revelation, stamping a directly divine sanction on the coinage of their own heated brain. Some females of ardent imagination appear to have been their most active instruments in diffusing these fanatical dreams. These maintained, and probably themselves believed, (Tertullian^h also himself giving implicit credit to their pretension,) that they were frequently admitted in ecstatic visions to hold high converse with angels and with the Lord himself, and to see and hear the most sublime mysteries. They generally fell into these trances after the services of the Church; and their visions usually related to the subjects before impressed on their

^h See *De Anima*, c. 9. for a full account of one of these visions, from which the particulars in the text are taken. I shall have occasion, in treating on Tertullian's Psychology, to return to this vision.

minds by the Lessons, Psalms, Prayers, and Discourses, to which they had just been listening. After the dismissal of the general congregation, these visions were privately announced to the select members of their own party, and carefully recorded.

We may probably form a sufficiently correct idea of these fanatical delusions, if we compare them with the very analogous pretensions to a revival of spiritual Charismata, which have arisen among a portion of the Christian world in our own days. And perhaps no more exact parallel has ever been drawn, than one which should be instituted between Tertullian, and the energetic and eloquent leader of that sect. In neither case do the errors materially affect the fundamentals of the faith; and although in consulting the writings of the parties implicated, they ought undoubtedly to teach us extreme caution wherever these peculiar opinions can in any manner influence the argument, and must diminish to the lowest point our reliance on any thing depending on the private judgment of the authors; still they cannot destroy our ad-

miration of their vigorous talent, nor deprive us of the use of their really sound defences of the common faith.

After these general preliminary observations, I shall proceed to a more specific examination of the character and value of the different treatises which Tertullian has left. To facilitate the more connected survey of these treatises, I shall arrange them in such distinct classes, as will naturally be suggested by the general argument and object of each; for there is scarcely any point of Christian theology, to which this voluminous writer has not dedicated more than one composition.

In the first of the classes, which convenience will thus suggest, we may place those treatises, of which the object is the vindication of the struggling faith against its heathen adversaries. Three works of such a description have descended to us from this writer; his larger and more finished *Apology*; his two books *ad Nationes*, which seem to have been a rough sketch of the former; and his address to *Scapula*, a president of Carthage.

The principal of these, the Apology, has been by some supposed to be addressed to the Senate of Rome; but the more probable view is that which considers it as an application to the Governors of the African Province. The few allusions to the circumstances of the times are not such as to assign with certainty the precise date, but that of A. D. 205 appears the most probable.

In its general topics it agrees so nearly with the earlier Apology of Justin, that a summary analysis of the one might almost equally serve for the other; only that these topics are not arranged in exactly the same order. In both we have a similar reclamation against the injustice and inconsistency with which, in the case of accusations against Christians, the legal principles applied to every other species of criminal indictment were violated; the same indignant refutation of the abominable charges of cannibalism and licentiousness made against their religious meetings; the same exposure of the impure absurdities of polytheism; the same unfounded fancy, that this idolatrous system was introduced by dæmons, sprung

from the intercourse of the lapsed angels with the daughters of men ; and the same arguments that the Christian doctrine of the Unity of the Deity was agreeable to the universal conclusions of right reason, as especially evinced by the kindred views of pure Theism entertained by the philosophers of Greeceⁱ. We also find similar statements and similar illustrations of the divinity of the Son of God, and his emanation from the Father ; and the arguments from the fulfilment of prophecy, and from the internal evidence afforded by the perfect purity of Christian morality, are pressed by both apologists, though much more concisely by Tertullian ; both also equally appeal to the rapid progress of the faith, and the swelling numbers of the Christian name. Many of these topics, it is true, must necessarily have suggested themselves to every advocate of such a cause ; but yet I think a far closer agreement will be found in the substance of

ⁱ The Greek philosophers, however, were supposed by Tertullian partly to have borrowed and partly perverted the doctrines which they had read in the far earlier documents of the Jewish Scriptures.

many of the arguments employed, (although in manner and style the difference of the two authors is sufficiently striking,) than would have been likely to have occurred, had not Tertullian very carefully studied the Apology of his predecessor.

He has, however, many other topics peculiarly his own, and characteristic of his own time. Thus, we may instance his being called upon to argue against the popular outcry, which ascribed all the public calamities then pressing upon the empire, already beginning to decline from its meridian height of power and prosperity, to the neglect of the ancient altars induced by the increasing growth of the new faith. And here we may also notice his anxiety to vindicate the Christians from the charge of disloyalty to the Imperial throne ; he forcibly argues, that their Christian subjects were most unjustly subjected to such a charge, because they refused to offer prayers for their emperors to them that were no gods ; to imaginary powers, who, far from being able to accord protection to the state, themselves owed to its interference their very existence.

“ Such an idle homage indeed,” he observes, “ Christians were forbidden to pay, but they were expressly commanded by the only true God to offer unto him the effectual prayer of faith in behalf of kings and all placed in authority ;” and he adds, that if Christians were indeed not to be seen crowding the idolatrous festivals in honour of their sovereign, neither were such to be detected lurking in the secret haunts of conspiracy, whetting concealed daggers to drink his blood.

One of Tertullian’s peculiar arguments must give rise to grave, and it may be painful, enquiry, namely, his statement that the dæmons mistaken for gods by the Romans, on being evoked in the name of the Lord “ a quolibet Christiano^k,” were

^k Bishop Kaye argues with respect to this passage, that so extensive an ascription of miraculous powers to Christians *generally*, at once invalidates the authority of the statement; as such powers appear to have been confined to those individuals, on whom the Apostles especially conferred the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands; and he therefore conceives the powers, which could only flow from such a source, to have necessarily expired on the decease of the last of the immediate disciples of the Apostles who had so received them.

forced to confess their real nature. We have here then, and that in a matter which undoubtedly wears a somewhat suspicious aspect, a full and direct assertion of the continuance of miraculous powers in the Church, to the close of the second century. And the tone of the appeal appears as confident as if it were a common and notorious fact. May we then in this case place reliance on the authority of Tertullian? or is it possible under such circumstances to imagine that he might himself have been deceived? The remaining alternative that he intentionally sought to deceive others, is not only painful in itself, but improbable; as involving the supposition, that he could have been sufficiently stultified to bring forward assertions in argument, which he must have known would admit so easy disproval, if he indeed knew them to be false. But perhaps we shall not greatly err, if we attribute a somewhat easy credulity to the disciple of the *nova Προφητεία* of Montanus, and the recorder of the ecstatic visions of his female followers. This singular passage, however, and the kindred dæmonological speculation

to which we have before alluded, are almost the only points which can raise a painful or unfavourable impression, while we read this most spirited Apology. In its general character we must feel it to be one of the most impressive and forcible appeals, presented in the whole circle of literature. And if we can for a moment put ourselves in the situation of those to whom it was originally addressed; and fancy ourselves to be perusing it with the feelings of an enquiring Roman of that day, with eyes opened to the absurdities of the vulgar mythology, little satisfied with the authority of any of the conflicting systems of philosophy, and yet uneasy to remain in the comfortless gloom of scepticism; we may well conceive how very effectively the vivid and powerful appeals of Tertullian must have operated on such a state of mind. In all such cases, we may be sure that this Apology would have told with far greater weight than the previous composition of Justin; for although so many of the arguments are substantially the same, yet they are always displayed by Tertullian with a far more consummate

rhetorical skill ; and although on one or two occasions this very art may have betrayed him into the introduction of some ornaments of rather questionable taste, still it is generally most judiciously employed to exhibit every topic touched upon in the bearing best calculated to affect those whom he addressed. If I were to select any features as peculiarly characteristic, I might mention the great sententiousness of style, and the forcible but delicate employment of irony, always pointed, yet never bitter. But perhaps the portion of his Apology which most dwells on the mind, are his forcible appeals to the general principles of toleration, in behalf of this purest and most benevolent, but yet most suffering, faith ; and his eloquent exposure of the utter inutility as well as injustice of a persecution calculated only eventually to defeat its own ends, “ *Plures enim efficimur quoties metimur a vobis, et semen est sanguis Christianorum,*” expressions which have since become proverbial¹.

¹ I cannot dismiss the subject of this Apology, without mentioning a remark which struck me in perusing it,

The two books, *ad Nationes*, appear to have been only a rough sketch of the *Apology*; and since they contain generally the same arguments, often expressed in the same words, cannot require any particular notice.

The address to Scapula, a persecuting governor of Carthage, (apparently after the death of the Emperor Severus,) commences, as the *Apology* closes, with a spirited appeal to the largest and most enlightened principles of toleration. “*Tamen humani*

and which I do not remember to have seen noticed elsewhere. Tertullian informs us, that a majority of those who had the right of citizenship in most of the cities, had embraced the Christian faith, ‘*pene omnium civitatum, pene omnes cives Christiani*,’ (cap. 37.) while yet the mobs of those cities were among its most furious opponents, ‘*nec ulli magis depostulatores Christianorum quam vulgus*.’ It is interesting, therefore, to observe, that it was principally among the middle classes, always the chief repository of the virtue and intelligence of a community, and morally superior to either its highest or lowest extreme, that Christian truth found the readiest reception. We know that the uncultivated peasantry of the remote villages were the last to exchange their ancient superstitions for a purer faith; whence the etymology of the term *Pagani*, which has become synonymous with Heathen.

juris, et naturalis potestatis est, unicuique quod putaverit colere; nec alii obest aut prodest alterius religio; sed nec religionis est, cogere religionem; quæ sponte suscipi debeat non vi; cum et hostiæ ab animo libenti expostulentur.” This is quite worthy to be placed on the same shelf with Bishop Taylor’s liberty of prophesying.

Tertullian then proceeds with many of the arguments before urged in his Apology, respecting the irreproachable morality and true loyalty of the Christian character. In a more questionable tone he appeals to the fears of Scapula, by a catalogue of retributive judgments which he represents as having fallen on notorious persecutors; and recites a wonderful cure effected on Septimius by the Christian Proculus. He then turns to an argument more likely to have produced effect, by addressing himself to the political prudence of the Roman governor, when he assures him, that to attempt the extirpation of the Christian name in the city over which he presided, would be in effect to decimate the people entrusted to his charge.

The very characteristic treatise of Tertullian *de Testimonio Animæ*, may be referred to this apologetical division of his writings, because it is directed to the advocacy of the great principles inculcated by Christianity with regard to the Deity, in opposition to the views of polytheism. For this purpose he here appeals to those innate conceptions of truth, of which the human mind appears to derive its consciousness from its very being; arguing that these inherent principles of our nature are entirely consentaneous to the dictates of revelation, concerning the one great and good God. He prefaces this appeal by the observation, that just and forcible as had been the arguments drawn by some of the more learned defenders of Christianity from its agreement with the best conclusions of the highest philosophy; yet since so many who delighted to follow that philosophy in its wildest aberrations, still perversely rejected its nearest approximations to truth, such arguments must lose much of their practical effect. He therefore himself intended to appeal to a new testimony,

“ *omni literatura notius, omni doctrina agitatius, omni editione vulgatius,*” greater than any other testimony of man, because it was absolutely identified with the essential principle of his very nature as man.

“ Stand forth then,” he eloquently proceeds, “ stand forth, O SOUL; whatever be thy nature or thy origin; stand forth, thou sole principle of all human knowledge. I summon thee, not as trained in the schools; not as exercised in the libraries, academies, and porticos of Athens; not as overflowing with acquired learning: but I call thee to record, simple and rude, unpolished and untaught; even such as thou art possessed by those who possess thee alone; such as thou art found in the cross ways, in the public street, and in the workshop of the artisan. I need thy want of skill alone; for on thy skill (small as it is at the best) men might refuse to rely. I demand from thee that alone which thou bringest with thee into men. That in which thou art self-taught, or canst only have learnt from the Author of thy being, whoever that Author may be: Thou art not yet to my knowledge a Chris-

tian, for Christians are not born, but made such. Yet Christians now demand testimony from thee a stranger, against thine own party; that those who now hate and deride us, for holding those very truths which compel thine own conscious assent, may be brought to blush before thee.”

Had Tertullian followed up this spirited appeal by dwelling on that witness of the Spirit to our spirit, indelibly engraved on the soul of man, by Him who has never left himself wholly without testimony there; a conscious evidence to which Tertullian’s assertion addressed to the soul of man, [*quæ et nunc te consciam detinent,*] may so truly be applied; how just and forcible an argument might he not then have constructed. But in place of this, he less happily appeals only to those familiar proverbial and colloquial expressions, by which in every language men are habituated almost profanely to allude to the existence and attributes of a God. He contends that the common conceptions which these untaught, and as it were natural, exclamations indicate, uniformly refer to one supreme and good God. But

surely the appeal should not have been confined to these the mere idle and customary phrases of the lips^m, but directed to the conscious feelings of the heart.

Next to his efforts in the advocacy of the Christian cause against the heathen, Tertullian's controversial support of that cause against the prejudiced adherents to the elder and introductory covenant may claim our notice. But here we must, I fear, be obliged to speak in far more measured terms, of the ability and efficiency with which the argument is conducted. All the defects to which we were before constrained to advert in reviewing Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, are still more prominently exhibited in Tertullian's treatise *Adversus Judæos*. He faithfully copies, and even adds to all the unjustifiable allegorical misinterpretations we had then to lament. And surely it cannot be now neces-

^m Tertullian, indeed, anticipates the objection, that these are only habitual phrases, and replies, "from whence then were they derived by the persons who first introduced that habit?" The argument from such phrases was a favourite one with Tertullian, who introduces it also in the 17th chapter of his *Apology*.

sary again to repeat our former remarks, on the injury which such blemishes were especially calculated to produce on the practical effect of the argument, which was to be maintained on such a subject and with such a people; nor need we dwell on the painful feelings which must be occasioned to every Christian mind, by the intermixture of so many weak and fanciful imaginations with the holiest truths to which it can be raisedⁿ.

In speaking of the typical ceremonies of the elder covenant, superseded by their fulfilment in the spiritual graces of the new, Tertullian joins the ordinance of the sabbath with those of circumcision and sacrifice. He argues, that the sabbath itself was but a similar typical rite prefiguring the perpetual rest of the Christian, and his abstinence from every spiritually servile work; an abstinence not in his case re-

ⁿ The reader who requires proof of the justice of this remark, may turn to the section of cap. 10. headed, *Item patriarchæ ostendunt figuram crucis*. From the feeling expressed in my text, I do not myself wish more distinctly to cite the passages.

stricted to the seventh day, but equally incumbent on every day. The sabbath he therefore argued could not be considered as of perpetual obligation; neither indeed had it, in his opinion, been thus established in the beginning, for he expressly denies that any satisfactory proof could be adduced that it was observed by Adam, or Abel, or Noah, or Abraham, or Melchizedec. The theological student may be aware, that the pious Baxter has maintained very similar sentiments; and that a writer, whose abilities we all in this place highly respect, has very recently adopted the same side; which all who embrace may well defend themselves under the shield of Tertullian's early authority. Still I should feel myself to be betraying a cause which I regard as involving very sacred obligations, did I hesitate to express my own dissent from the justice and soundness of this opinion. And undoubtedly, the far more general persuasion of the great authorities of our Church has ever been, that the Christian appointment of the Lord's day, being the allotment of an equally

septenary portion of our time to religious exercises°, is sufficient fully to maintain the strictest analogy of the elder and newer dispensations in this respect; and must be considered not as an abolition, but rather as a substitution ordained by the Spirit through the Apostles; and therefore resting precisely on the same divine authority with the original institution. Just

° It should be observed, that it is very satisfactory to find, that Tertullian himself, in another place, warmly urges the necessity of a strict abstinence from all secular employments on the Lord's day; "*Nos vero sicut accepimus, die Dominicæ resurrectionis ab omni anxietatis habitu cavere debemus, differentes etiam negotia, ne quem Diabolo locum demus.*" De Orat. cap. 23. tom. iv. p. 22. In the same place, he remarks on a custom which we know to have partially prevailed in the early Church, of worshipping only in an upright posture on this day, from regarding it as a festival of holy rejoicing; while the outward act of 'humbly kneeling on their knees,' was considered only appropriate to fasts. Tertullian says, however, that this practice was only observed, *per pauculos quosdam qui Sabbato abstinent genibus.* He laments the injurious effect of such diversities, and prays that the Lord would give them grace, *ut aut cedant, aut sententiâ sua sine aliorum scandalo utantur.* His designation of the Lord's day as *Sabbatum* in this passage, is remarkable as contrasted with his views of the abolition of the Sabbath.

as in a parallel case, we consider the initiatory rite of Circumcision to be replaced in its spiritual character by the substitution of Baptism, as the sacramental seal of our admission into the Christian covenant.

We have next to follow Tertullian in his combats with those more distressing, because internal, enemies of the Christian Church, the heretics who usurped its name, while they disregarded its authority, and falsified its doctrine. The parties whom Tertullian was called to oppose, were the various divisions of the same Gnostic sects, which had before engaged the animadversions of Irenæus, and the principles on which both these defenders of the faith proceed are very similar.

But there are some points connected with the particular application of these principles by Tertullian, which strongly require an examination at once careful and candid, to prevent their being seriously misunderstood. These points are fully developed in his treatise, entitled, the Prescription of Heretics, a term which he appears to use in its forensic

acceptation, as denoting prescriptive claims of right.

In his introductory chapters, Tertullian assigns the great causes which had given birth to these heretical corruptions, and imparted their prevalent characters ; these he asserts to have been the desire to introduce the spirit of secular philosophy into the investigation of the Christian mysteries ; and the affectation of an unbridled range of curious enquiry, ever searching after novelty, and never content to repose in ascertained truth. Against both these perverse tempers he reasons powerfully and judiciously, and he insists on the compendious creed of the Church, the *Regula Fidei* ^p, of which I have already spoken, as the sure and authoritative confession of the faith once revealed ; *adversus quam nihil scire et omnia scire*.

^p A recital of this *Regula Fidei* is given, cap. 10. (tom. ii. p. 17.) which, if compared with that before cited from the treatise *De Virg. Vel.* cap. 1. will be found substantially the same, but considerably amplified in expression. It closely agrees with the *κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας* cited in the last Lecture.

After this introduction, Tertullian proceeds to lay down, as his leading maxim in the conduct of this controversy, a principle, which, broadly and unguardedly as it is here announced, must undoubtedly at first sight appear abundantly startling^q. I allude to his absolute refusal to enter into dispute with these heretics, on the ground of any appeal to Scripture. *Hunc igitur potissimum gradum obstruimus, non admittendi eos ad illam de scripturis disputationem*^r.

I am persuaded, however, that we shall greatly misunderstand the force of Tertullian's argument, if we believe that these observations, which are expressed as usual with all the incautiousness of warm rhetorical declamation, proceeded from the intention in any manner to undervalue a fair appeal to the genuine Scriptures. But in this case the copies of the Scriptures referred to by the heretics were, as we have before observed in our remarks on Irenæus,

^q e. g. *Quoniam nihil proficiat congressio Scripturorum, nisi plane ut aut stomachi quis ineat eversionem aut cerebri. Cap. 16.*

^r Cap. 15. (p. 20.)

mutilated to a degree of which the present age happily afford us no example. If then we were to compare his refusal to admit an appeal to such Scriptures, to the very just reluctance which an orthodox writer of the present day might express to admit a similar appeal to the Unitarian version of the New Testament, we should state a case similar indeed in its kind, but in its degree so much weaker, as quite to destroy the parallelism. “*Ista hæresis non recipit quasdam Scripturas; et si quas recipit, adjectionibus et detractationibus ad dispositionem instituti sui intervertit, et si recipit, non recipit integras, et si aliquatenus integras præstat, nihilominus diversas expositiones commentata convertit^s.*” Tertullian, therefore, very justly observes, that under these circumstances, before an appeal to the Scriptures could be prosecuted with any prospect of arriving at a satisfactory

^s Cap. 17. (p. 21.) In another passage (cap. 39. p. 51.) he compares these mutilated Scriptural compilations to mere centos constructed from the older classical poets. “*Quo jure hodie ex Virgilio fabulam in totam aliam componi solet; materia secundum versus, versibus secundum materias concinnatis.*”

conclusion, there was a preliminary question, which required to be first determined, namely, which party was in possession of the genuine copies of that original document, of which such different editions were produced by both^t. And here he forcibly argues, that every prescriptive claim to the possession of these documents, must be fairly considered as vested in the orthodox Churches; because these, having been founded by the Apostles themselves, had been governed by a continual succession of ministers originating in their appointment^u. The uniform agreement of all these apostolical Churches, so numerous and often so remote, he most justly insists upon as the surest proof that they had all firmly adhered to one and the same truth; for unity must ever prove great character of truth, and variety of error. If then we could imagine this Catholic doctrine to be erroneous, he argues, we must suppose the Holy Spirit to have deserted, not one or a few, but all these Churches; and we should further have to account for the in-

^t Cap. 19.^u Cap. 20, 21.

conceivable fact, that being so deserted, they had all deviated into exactly the same line of error*. Nor was it less incredible, that if the doctrines proposed by the heretics correctly represented the truths of the Gospel, the first full discovery of them should have been reserved for the later age of Marcion; that Christianity should have been so long preached before the true Christ was made known. Truth, he maintains, can never be thus posterior to error, for the substance must assuredly have an anterior existence to its own shadow.

On such grounds then Tertullian asserts, that the appeal of the heretics *to their Scriptures* could never be allowed to have weight; inasmuch as this prescriptive argument demonstrated with all the force of legal evidence, that those who were altogether estranged from the Catholic Church, could assert no just claim to the possession of her inalienable property, the pure oracles of God^y. He concludes this part of the argument in language which must remove all misapprehension of its real scope and

* Cap. 28.

^y Cap. 37. p. 47.

bearing, “ Illic igitur et Scripturarum et expositionum adulteratio deputanda est, ubi diversitas invenitur doctrinæ. Sicut illis non potuisset succedere corruptela doctrinæ, sine corruptela instrumentorum ; *Ita et nobis integritas doctrinæ non competit, sine integritate eorum per quæ doctrina tractatur.* Equidem quid contrarium nobis in nostris ? quid de proprio intulimus, ut aliquid contrarium ei, et in Scripturis deprehensum, detractatione, vel adjectione, vel transmutatione remediaremus ? *Quod sumus hoc sunt Scripturæ ab initio suo ; ex illis sumus*^z.” Here Tertullian most eloquently shews, that he considered the faithful agreement of the Catholic Church with the pure and unadulterated records of inspiration, as her great distinguishing feature, as the sole guarantee of the integrity of her own faith, and as exclusively constituting her real title to a just authority. The Scriptures, he adds, formed her title deeds, and it was therefore alike her duty and her interest to preserve them pure and uncorrupted.

^z Cap. 38. p. 49.

This work concludes with a catalogue of the principal heretics, and a compendious summary of their opinions ^a.

The polemical treatises of Tertullian, which we have last noticed, were, as we have seen, directed against parties who may in truth be considered rather as having set

^a From cap. 46 to 53. In the chapters which precede this catalogue, (cap. 41, 42. p. 54, 55.) some remarks occur so strikingly applicable to the conduct of the political dissenters of the present day, that I cannot resist here quoting them. “Nihil enim interest licet diversa tractantibus, dum ad unius Veritatis expugnationem conspirent. Et hoc est quod Schismata apud Hæreticos fere non sunt. Schisma est Unitas ipsa. Quoniam et ipsum opus eorum non de suo proprio ædificio venit, sed de veritatis destructione; nostra suffodiunt ut sua ædificent. Ita fit ut ruinas facilius operentur stantium ædificiorum, quam extructiones jacentium ruinarum. Ad hæc solummodo opera humiles et blandi et summissi agunt.”

I ought not to close my brief notice of this important tract, without quoting the just and indignant refutation which it contains of the fatal fiction of a double doctrine, exoteric and esoteric, entertained in common by the heretics and Clemens Alexandrinus; in this Tertullian closely follows Irenæus, Sed ut diximus, eadem dementia est quum confitentur quidem nihil Apostolos ignorasse, nec diversa inter se prædicasse; non tamen omnia volunt illos omnibus revelasse; quædam enim palam et universis, quædam secreto et paucis demandasse. Cap. 25.

up new religions of their own invention, entirely contradictory to Christianity, than merely as having introduced more slight sectarian divisions in the same general faith^b.

Our attention will in the next place be drawn by the tract against Praxeas, to a controversy far more closely domestic; and the first of which we have any extant monument, concerning the important doctrine of the Trinity^c. Praxeas, assuming

^b In the descriptive catalogue above referred to, Tertullian has mentioned all the sects animadverted upon by Irenæus, with one or two additions; and has left a particular refutation of Marcion in five books, occupying the whole first volume of Semler's edition; also a shorter treatise against the Valentinians. Tom. ii. p. 143—188. We have likewise a treatise (tom. ii. p. 79—142.) against Hermogenes, an heretic not mentioned by Irenæus, who maintained the eternity and inherent evil of matter, to which all the moral and physical disorders of nature were to be attributed. Tertullian in this treatise justly observes, that all such views must be considered as ultimately resolving themselves into the system of Dualism.

^c We have, however, notices of the earlier heresies of Theodotus and Artemon; the former seems completely to have embraced the hypothesis, now called Socinian, of the simple Humanity of Christ, *Doctrinam enim introduxit qua Christum hominem tantummodo diceret; Deum autem illum negaret.* (Tertull. de Præscript. Hær. cap. 53. p. 78.) We may remember, that Justin, in his

as the basis of his system the two great doctrines of the orthodox faith, namely, the Unity of the Godhead, and the Divine nature of Christ, had yet combined them in an heretical form, maintaining the absolute personal identity of the Father and the Son. Thus, as Tertullian begins his refutation, doth the adversary of truth adopt the most various stratagems in conducting his attacks, and sometimes seeks the overthrow, by appearing to defend it. And here it is curious to observe, how singularly those extreme opinions, which at first sight appear most widely opposed, will be found unexpectedly to glide into each other. Praxeas maintained Christ to be the very person of the most high Father; Socinus pronounced him to be a mere man; yet we find in another passage^d, that in order to evade the difficulties of their scheme, the followers of Praxeas actually introduced a personal division in place of the one person of Jesus Christ,

Dialogue, alludes to similar opinions as entertained by some in his time; he is considered as referring to the Ebionites, a Judaizing sect.

^d Cap. 26.

maintaining the spiritual and divine nature (the Christ) to be identical with the Father, and the human nature to be the man Jesus; which would virtually resolve the whole scheme into the Socinian hypothesis, of a mere man acting under the inspiration and guidance of the one Father^e. These hereti-

^e Thus he writes, (cap. 13.) “ We define the Father and the Son as two, and, including the Holy Spirit, three, according to the scheme of the economy, as it is called, which represents a numerical distinction; yet we never speak of two Gods or two Lords, though we doubt not that the Father is God, and the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; and that each one of these is God.” To give any thing like an analysis of the arguments by which these great truths are maintained, would in itself occupy an entire Lecture. Nor can it be at all desirable, after the very able manner in which that task has been performed by Bishop Kaye: and I cannot refer to this portion of his work, without particularly inviting attention to his clear and excellent exposure of those insidious notes, by which the German editor has endeavoured to twist into a sense favourable to Arianism every less guarded expression or illustration into which, in that earlier stage of the Trinitarian controversy, it was so easy to fall. I shall here only observe, that while Tertullian very justly maintains, (cap. 2.) *Hanc regulam ab initio Evangelii decurrisset, etiam ante priores quoque Hereticos; nedum ante Praxeam hesternum*, and considers this very novelty as in itself a sufficient confutation; his arguments are yet always built on the

cal views have, however, indirectly produced, an important advantage to the orthodox faith, by calling forth from the pen of Tertullian by far the most valuable exposition and defence of that faith which had yet appeared. And we shall find the sentiments here delivered concerning this great doctrine in the very closest agreement with the spirit, and often expressed almost in the very words, of the more doctrinal

very words of Scripture, which are most copiously cited; nor does he ever find it necessary to resort to any traditional explanation distinct from their plain grammatical sense. It must, however, be regretted, that he does occasionally appeal to a still more questionable source, the fancied illumination claimed by the disciples of Montanus; “*Nos enim et tempora et causas Scripturarum per Dei gratiam inspicimus, maxime Paracleti non hominum discipuli.*” Yet happily on this important subject, the views of the Montanists do not appear to have been either heterodox or injudicious. Tertullian expressly borrows from this source his favourite physical analogies, comparing the mysterious union of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to that of the sun, the ray of light, and the luminous point in which it terminates; or of the root, the shrub, and the fruit; or of the spring, the stream, and the river. Bishop Kaye has well observed, that these, like all similar comparisons, may sufficiently serve the purpose of illustration, but must fail if pressed beyond this.

Creeds subsequently adopted by the Catholic Church, and of course therefore with the Articles of our own.

I may next pass to those treatises which, though less controversial, relate to the establishment of his views on points intimately connected with the very foundation of every moral and intellectual question; namely, in the first place, the nature, properties, and prospects of the human soul; and, secondly, the peculiar Christian doctrine of the resurrection of its companion, the body.

The treatise of Tertullian *De Anima* must be regarded by those who are conversant with the progress of metaphysical enquiries, as an extremely curious and interesting specimen of the state of such discussions in that age. But to pursue such investigations at any length were altogether unsuited to this place; I shall only briefly advert to such points as seem to have the most direct bearing on theology. I may first, however, observe, that the work before us is evidently the production of a mind in itself very powerful and acute,

and deeply imbued with the philosophy and science of that day. Tertullian in this treatise very commonly enters the lists of argument in opposition to Plato. And it may fairly be stated, that in their strength they do not appear very unequally matched; and the occasional erroneous statements and visionary speculations of the Christian Father, are far from being without a parallel in the pages of the founder of the Academy. It is, however, very singular to observe, with regard to the principal point in dispute between them, namely, the question whether the nature of the soul be material or immaterial, that the African Presbyter warmly embraces the side of materialism^f, usually regarded as the hypo-

^f It is not, however, quite clear, what is the real character of the material hypothesis as advocated by Tertullian, when he asserts the soul to be *corpus sui generis*; for we find him in other places professedly employing the term *corpus* as synonymous with substance, and denoting real existence of any kind. “*Omne quod est, corpus est sui generis. Nihil est incorporale, nisi quod non est.*” (De Carne Christi, c. 11.) He therefore attributes the term even to God, “*Quis enim negabit Deum corpus esse; etsi Deus Spiritus.*” It might therefore thus seem to be a mere question of nomenclature, depending on

thesis least favourable in its tendencies to Christian views; whereas the Athenian philosopher had defended the opposite theory, in which he would number the great majority of divines as his allies. Yet Tertullian will probably himself again reclaim the support of such divines, when he proceeds to argue, that the soul is essentially a single and simple principle, and therefore indivisible; “it ministers indeed to different operations and energies, as in informing the several organs of the different senses; but these,” he contends, “cannot be called component parts, for distribution does not imply division^c. Thus

the definition of the properties implied by the qualifying phrase ‘*sui generis*,’ whether they were such as to constitute a material or immaterial substance. The general scope of Tertullian’s argument, however, undoubtedly appears to imply, that he ascribed really material attributes, though of a somewhat more refined quality, to the soul. He was confirmed in his belief of the materiality of the soul, by a vision which a Montanist lady reported to him; who, after hearing a discourse from him on this subject, had fallen into a trance, and was permitted to behold an actual soul. It was transparent, and of an ethereal colour, palpable to the touch, but very soft, and in form and proportions resembling a man.

^c c. 14.

in the complicated machinery of the grand hydraulic organ of Archimedes, the single stream of air which pervaded and gave breath to all the multitudinous rows of pipes, was not itself separated into parts, because it was administered through parts, it was divided in operation, but in substance continuous." Here we shall, I think, equally admire the beauty of the illustration, and agree in the justice of the conclusion. And again, when, in opposition to Plato, he maintains the credit due to the testimony of the senses^b, we must feel that he is vindicating not a single truth, but the very basis of all truth, and that which forms the only barrier against the inroads of an universal scepticism. Nor will he less claim our assent, in his refutation of the visionary Platonic theory, so eagerly embraced by Origen, of the preexistence of the soul, and the origination of its knowledge in the reminiscences derived from some former state; all which he justly couples with the kindred speculation of the Pythagorean metempsychosis.

^b c. 17.

With reference to subjects more strictly theological, Tertullian distinctly acknowledges the corruption of the soul, *ex originali vitio*; a corruption induced by the author of evil, so as greatly to obscure, yet not entirely to extinguish, the better and divine principle derived from God. He states, that every soul is thus reckoned in Adam, until it is reckoned anew in Christ by baptism.

After an examination of the phenomena of sleep, which he describes as an affection of the body not of the soul, he concludes by turning from this *speculum mortis* to death itself, the temporary separation of the soul from the bodyⁱ. In this intermediate state he conceived the souls of men to retain their conscious faculties; they had no power to return, to revisit the scenes of the middle earth, but were reserved in distinct subterranean abodes, appropriate

ⁱ Cap. 55. The souls of martyrs alone were supposed to be admitted to the heavenly regions immediately on death; in proof of which, Revelations vi. 9. was cited, where the souls of martyrs alone are represented as being seen beneath the altar. All spectral appearances were attributed to *dæmons*, who assumed the form of the deceased.

to their several characters, until the final judgment.

From this treatise we should naturally proceed to that de Resurrectione Carnis, which consists of nearly the same arguments we have already considered when examining the disquisition on that subject by Athenagoras. The spirit and much of the substance of this treatise will be found transferred by Bp. Pearson to his explanation of the corresponding Article of the Creed.

Turning from the doctrinal to the practical treatises of Tertullian, we have to lament, that many of these are deeply tinged with the extravagances of Montanism. The first of these, however, which I shall now mention, the tract de Patientia, is clearly exempt from these censures, and was probably written while he himself continued a member of the Church.

The body of this work consists of an examination into the various causes and circumstances which most call for the exercise of this Christian grace, and which form the usual temptations to an opposite temper.

The Christian consolations and remedies applicable to each particular case are powerfully and eloquently stated. The introduction is remarkable for a striking example of Christian humility; for the author commences by the penitent confession of his own conscious deficiency in the temper he so earnestly desires to recommend to others. "In every destitution," he observes, "we may still find some solace in discussing the goods we ourselves no longer enjoy. Nor can those who languish in sickness, refrain from discoursing on the lost blessings of health. And even thus, while myself a wretched sufferer from the fever of impatience, I would give free vent to my sighs and prayers for this grace, which alone can restore to my soul that health, otherwise unattainable."

In the conclusion, we are presented with a very graphic portrait of the external appearance of the patient man. "His countenance is tranquil and serene, his forehead open, and contracted by no wrinkle of wrath or discontent, his brows smoothly bent in unruffled cheerfulness, his eyes cast down

in humility, not in grief, his mouth stamped with the silence of submission, his complexion beaming from an innocent and secure heart; and the pure and stainless vestment fitting closely to his breast typifies the absence of defilement and inflation within.”

The tract in which Tertullian has embodied his exhortations to constancy, amidst the storms of persecution, which though intermitted for a while, still threatened the Church ever and anon, may next claim our attention. Such exhortations have often been accused of fanatical excess; but surely it is dealing most unjust measure, so to stigmatize as an overheated enthusiasm in the case of the Christian martyr, the very same sentiments which we applaud as most noble and elevated, when we find them applied by the historians and poets of classical antiquity to the heroical devotion which would scorn to sacrifice truth to safety, and to abandon from the love of life the causes which impart to life its just value and dignity. Never surely can such sentiments be associated with higher motives or with a nobler

end, than when the Christian is called to resist unto blood striving against sin. It may be true indeed, that after Tertullian had attached himself to the Montanists, his zeal did in this, as in other points, degenerate into extravagance; but against his earlier address *Ad Martyres*, there appears no ground of objection; unless indeed in point of taste, that it is far too profuse in rhetorical ornament, where the simplest and most unaffectedly solemn appeal to the certainty of the Christian's faith and to the confidence of his hope, had been the truest and most powerful eloquence.

Neither can any improper excess of enthusiasm be justly objected against Tertullian, when in his *Scorpiace* he reproaches the mean and equivocating evasions by which the Gnostics endeavoured to escape the dangers attendant on the faithful confession of Christ before man; by persuading themselves, that merely to deny the fact that they were Christians, was not to incur the guilt of denying the Lord himself.

In his tract *De Fuga*, we must however acknowledge, that he cannot himself be jus-

tified, when he condemns as guilty of desertion of duty those proper precautions of self-preservation, expressly sanctioned by our Lord's own positive direction, "when they persecute you in one city, flee unto another."

It was not, however, alone to arm the Christian against the extreme trials of martyrdom, that Tertullian felt himself called to exert his powerful eloquence. He published equally warm and anxious dissuasives against every instance of compromise with the customs of our idolatrous world, which must have formed in those times the daily trial of the faithful. On this subject the line he draws is undoubtedly strict, and high; and such as must seem to a colder zeal exaggerated, and to the maxims of a worldly policy imprudent; but the real Christian will weigh things by a far different standard, and in his view the excess of an over-delicate conscience, in avoiding every approximation to vicious compromise, must ever appear far more respectable than the insensibility which would shrink from the grossest and most

palpable offence alone. Every rightly conscientious mind must therefore entirely approve the general principle of this treatise ; although the manner in which the author carries out its application to all the minutest points of the relations and commerce of life may be regarded as over scrupulous, and in one or two instances injudicious and incorrect ; but we must all agree in his conclusion, “ In this world faith navigates amidst dangerous shoals and rocks, *tuta si cauta, si attonita secura.*”

In his treatise *de Spectaculis*, Tertullian maintains, that these exhibitions should be avoided by Christians, not only on account of their partial connection with idolatry, and of the cruelty of some of them, and the impurity and immorality of others ; but he proceeds much further than this, and enters fully into the spirit of the arguments by which the more ascetic have ever decried the mingling in such secular amusements, as inconsistent with our baptismal renunciations^j.

^j Cyprian has avowed equally strict principles on this point in his *Epistle to Eucratius*. (Ep. 2. Fell.)

The tract *de Corona Militis* is, from the animadversion of the historian of the Decline and Fall, much more familiarly known to the general reader. It cannot, therefore, be expected that I should now detain you by any particular examination of the Montanistic arguments by which Tertullian here defends the scruples of a soldier, apparently of that party who refused to place on his head the military wreath presented to him on the occasion of a public donative^k.

Obvious reasons will render it equally unnecessary and undesirable, on an occasion like the present, to enter into any particular examination of the several tracts in which Tertullian enforces his favourite arguments on the subject of monogamy and celibacy¹; neither can we here be expected to pause to examine the precepts of this

* This tract should be compared with the arguments employed by Clemens Alexandrinus in his *Παιδαγωγός*, to condemn the use of garlands by Christians. Tertullian urges the authority of unwritten tradition on this point; and he also gives a list of many points of ritual observance in Baptism, which he refers to the same tradition.

¹ Viz. *de Monogamia de Castitate de Pudicitia*.

Father *de habitu muliebri* or *de cultu fœminorum*, or the tract *de Virginibus Velandis* ; yet, it were surely not the character of a sincerely religious mind to ridicule as trifling the application of the spirit of religion to the whole of our outward conduct, and even to the regulation of the propriety and modesty of our apparel.

The last works of this Father which remain to be noticed are those which relate to points of Christian discipline and devotion ; and these undoubtedly require a more careful and distinguishing examination ; because, while they are strongly marked by the ability and warm piety so characteristic of their author, they yet very frequently breathe a spirit of exaggerated severity, and are, at least in one very important point, (that of *pædo-baptism*,) directly opposed to the judgment of the Church.

The treatise *de Pœnitentia* is written with all the force and pointedness of Tertullian's most energetic style. A great part of its subject-matter relates far more to the well-known strict penitential discipline of the Church of that day, in re-

quiring the external confession, the *ἐξομολόγησις* of repentance, in acts of public penance, than to the inward workings of the *μετάνοια* of the heart. This discipline, I need not now remark, was in later ages very materially relaxed throughout the whole Church, and is now in our own practically abandoned. By Tertullian it was upheld in its severest form; but yet it may be said, not more rigidly than it was enforced by the Councils of the following century.

We must keep in mind also, that this public discipline affected such only as for graver and more notorious crimes had incurred exclusion from the communion of the Church; but for the lighter sins of infirmity, for the negligences and ignorances which the Christian will find daily occasion to deplore, the necessity of daily mental repentance was ever inculcated as quite distinct from this public discipline^m.

^m On this subject I would refer to that most copious store of ecclesiastical information, Bingham, *Antiq. book xviii. chap. 4.* From this source I borrow the following quotation from Origen: *In gravioribus crimi-*

If we confound the two cases, we shall fall into serious error, and attribute to the early Church principles and practices which she was assuredly far from maintaining. As to her public discipline, she can need no vindication. For every society, viewed even in its civil character alone, has an undoubted right to exclude from its privileges those whose offences are injurious to its constitution; and who shall blame the strict, and it may be even severe, anxiety of the Church, to preserve herself before her Lord, ἅγια καὶ ἄμωμος, μὴ ἔχουσα σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα, ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων, an attention more especially required under the peculiar circumstances of those trying times. With regard to the conditions of external humiliation, which she prescribed to those who sought readmission, these must undoubtedly be regarded as of no value in the sight of the heart-searching God, excepting in

nibus semel tantum, vel raro pœnitentiæ conceditur locus: Ista vero communia quæ frequenter incurrimus, semper pœnitentiam recipiunt. While we do not recognise the Romish distinctions of venial and mortal crime; we do not surely, on the other hand, maintain the Stoical maxim, omnia peccata esse æqualia.

as far as they may be the genuine signs of a sincere internal contrition of the soul. And if regarded in any degree as a substitute for that deep and real feeling, they will become perverted to the most dangerous abuse. But yet the exemplary influence of these open humiliations in the sight of the brethren, may have been very availing as a warning and safeguard; and it may well be questioned, whether the cheerful submission to these painful forms, must not have afforded at last as good reason to believe in the sincere repentance of the heart, as we can have, where nothing of the kind is required. As to the limitation of this readmission by the Church, in her earlier and stricter day, to a single instance after gross lapse into such public scandals; we must never imagine that, although she scrupled to restore members on whose steadiness she could place no reliance to her own visible communion, she yet by any means considered them finally excluded from the atonement of their Saviour, and the mercies of their God ⁿ.

ⁿ The views laid down by Tertullian in this treatise

The views of the early Church, and the discipline to which they led, may indeed

concerning the penitential discipline of the Church may be thus shortly stated.

After dwelling on the sacramental efficacy of Baptism as conveying the remission of all former sins, he adds, that if after the grace thus sought in Baptism, the professing convert should again lapse into gross transgression, there was indeed ample cause for alarm, but not for despair. For the threatenings of God against the impenitent, clearly imply that he has mercy in store for the penitent; and the beautiful parables of Luke xv. fully declare his joy in the repentance of a sinner; a second door of repentance is therefore open to the anxious penitent, by which he may be once more readmitted into the Church: but yet, lest so much mercy should be abused, Tertullian argues, that the profession of heartfelt repentance, which had satisfied the Church in the former instance of the candidate's admission to Baptism, must now be joined with the most humiliating acts of public confession and outward penance; *hujus igitur pœnitentiæ secundæ tanto operosior probatio, ut non solâ conscientiâ proferatur, sed aliquo etiam actu administraretur.* (Cap. 9.) This door of penitence also the Church, as we have seen, then opened once, and but once, to such gross and public delinquents. *Collocavit in vestibulo pœnitentiam secundam, quæ pulsantibus patefaciat: sed jam semel quia jam secundo; sed amplius numquam quia proxime frustra.* (Cap. 7.) But it seems impossible to conceive, that many of the arguments by which Tertullian encourages the penitent, should be restricted to one single opportunity of return to the backsliding though baptized convert. Tertullian,

appear severe; but we cannot fail to remark, how entirely irreconcilable they are with any thing but the strictest holiness, and how remote from that interested priestcraft, which, seeking to make a gain of godliness, or rather a traffic of ungodliness, contributed more than any other cause to open a door to the Reformation.

The tract de Jejunio should here be mentioned, as also relating to matters of devotional discipline. But it cannot require any particular notice, being in fact merely an extravagant vindication of the extreme austerities of the Montanists, directed against the general body of Christians, whom the

assuredly, when he so strongly enforces them, “*Heus tu peccator, bono animo sis, vides ubi de tui reditu gaudeatur,*” must have looked beyond the discipline of the Church to infinitely higher purposes of Almighty mercy. The principle of this seemingly severe limitation, is evidently to be traced to the fear, lest, by a greater laxity, any encouragement should be held out to the very dangerous idea, that men might safely go on professing repentance, and yet returning to sin. “*Absit ut aliquis ita interpretetur quasi eo sibi etiam nunc pateat ad delinquendum: quia patet ad pœnitendum: et redundantia clementiæ cœlestis libidinem faciat humanæ temeritatis. Nemo idcirco deterior sit, quia Deus melior est, totiens delinquendo quotiens ignoscetur.*” (See capp. 6 and 8.)

author here and elsewhere stigmatises as *ψυχικοὶ*, or men of a natural and unspiritualized mind, in contradistinction to the higher pretensions of his own party, who are always called *Spiritales*.

The treatise *De Baptismo* is in every way one of the least valuable of this author. It is far more occupied by mystical speculations, on the figures supposed to have typified the spiritual efficacy of water, than by any practical remarks on the nature and uses of the Sacrament. He then enters into discussions on the distinction of the baptism of Christ and John; on the reasons why Christ himself did not baptize; and on the question whether the Apostles in their own persons had ever received baptism; all which as he treats them are far more curious than profitable. In others of his tracts we have far more real information on the subject of baptism than in this; thus in the tract *De Corona Militis*, we find an incidental detail of the forms in which it was in that age administered; and in the tract *De Pœnitentia*°, we find much clearer

° In that treatise we find the following observations

views of the spiritual preparations and accompaniments of this Sacrament.

If, however, in this tract we see little to instruct us, we undoubtedly meet with enough to startle, in its direct opposition to a practice which, with this single exception, the Church ever appears to have recognized as Apostolical, that, namely, of infant baptism. While protesting against the impropriety of too hastily conferring this Sacrament without due examination of the qualification of the parties offering themselves, he expressly and especially condemns the custom of bringing infants to

with regard to the sacramental efficacy of Baptism, as appointed for the remission of sins. "The grace of God cannot be brought under bondage to means, nor is his promise pledged to such as unworthily partake in those means." He adds, "that we do not receive this outward washing in order to make us desist from sin, but that our very desiring it ought to shew that we have already desisted from sin, being first washed inwardly in our heart." Not that he in any way doubted the efficacy of the Sacrament, when worthily received. *Neque enim renuo divinum beneficium, id est abolitionem delictorum inituris aquam, omni modo salvum esse; sed ut ea pervenire contingat elaborandum est. Quis enim tibi tam infidæ pœnitentiæ viro, asperginem unam cujuslibet aquæ commodabit?*

the font ; and we may have already perhaps observed, that his remarks generally on this Sacrament, are such as must appear applicable to the case of adult baptism only. It has, however, been justly remarked, that his very objections appear to imply, that the baptism of infants was then the common usage ; and he informs us that the injunction of Christ, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, was then as now applied to justify this practice. Origen, very nearly the contemporary of Tertullian, more than once attests it to have been established in his time ; and within half a century we find Cyprian convening a general council of the very same African district to which Tertullian himself belonged, to discuss the proper time of baptism ; when it appeared, that the only question which any of that provincial body considered as open to doubt was, whether from the analogy of circumcision this Sacrament ought not always to be administered on the eighth day after birth, or if it might be allowed in cases of necessity to administer it still earlier.

I have purposely reserved the consideration of the tract de Oratione for the closing subject of the present Lecture. For it is gratifying to turn from every harsher topic to the holy peace of prayer; and this selection will also enable us to take our leave of an author, always pious though often mistaken, in language of unqualified approbation^p. Tertullian justly adopts, as the source and guide of all his reflections on this subject, the perfect form in which our blessed Lord, complying with his disciples' request, instructed them how to pray; "for this," he observes, "in its comprehensive brevity condenses in the fewest words the most diffusive extent of meaning, and comprises not only every due homage to God and every needful prayer for men, but combines instruction with every petition; ita ut revera in oratione, brevium totius Evangelii comprehendatur. It is therefore

^p I here intend to speak of the first thirteen chapters of this treatise; those which follow are reasonably believed to be supposititious, and are wanting in many MSS; they are altogether alien in matter and spirit from the preceding, and principally relate to the same points as the treatise De Virginibus Velandis.

his object, by carefully analysing each successive petition, to expand it in all the fulness of its just development, to point out its true application and bearing, and to illustrate it by the comparison with those parallel Scriptures best suited to throw light on its objects, and direct attention to the duties it implies.

He executes this task faithfully, spiritually, and judiciously, and sums it up with this recapitulation. “ In the compendium of these few words, how many declarations of Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles ; how many discourses and parables of our Lord ; how many examples, precepts, and duties, are at once inculcated ? The honour of God, in his invocation as our Father ; the testimony of our faith, in the sanctification of his Name ; the commemoration of our hope, in the mention of his kingdom ; our dependence on his providence in the petition for daily bread ; our contrite sense of our debts, in our supplication for his remission ; our anxious watchfulness against temptation, in our prayer for his safe guidance. Quid

mirum," he exclaims in concluding this summary, "Deus solus docere potuit, ut se vellet orari."

"But prayer," he adds, "to be acceptably offered, must proceed from a faithful heart, brought into obedience to the will of God. "Memoria enim præceptorum, viam orationibus sternit ad cælum. Every angry temper, every unholy imagination, must be extinguished. Nec ab ira solummodo, sed omni omnino confusione animi libera debet esse orationis intentio; de tali Spiritu emissa, qualis est Spiritus ad quem mittitur."

And such are the reflections which in conclusion I could most desire to leave impressed on my own mind, and on those which I am called to address; for it is in truth in such feelings that the sum and substance of real religion must ever consist; and while we are pursuing, and properly pursuing, the more scholastic investigations of theology, let us never so pursue them as to lose sight of the higher and holier feelings of spiritual religion; those feelings which indeed raise

our souls to the great Spirit of heaven,
and bring our spirits in some degree into
conformity with his.

LECTURE VII.

1 TIM. iv. 12.

*Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation,
in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

THE reminiscences connected with the history of the earliest Latin Fathers, whose reputation and works have descended to posterity, are necessarily blended with a subject full of melancholy reflection, when we consider the particular provincial Church to which those Fathers belonged. Northern Africa, long the fertile granary of Rome, was then equally fruitful in supplying her with those who administered of the bread of life. The first of the Latin Fathers, Tertullian, whose works we surveyed in the former Lecture, and Cyprian, who now claims our next attention, were both luminaries of the African Church; a Church whose lamp is now so entirely removed

from its place. Alas ! how has all this physical and intellectual culture disappeared beneath the withering influences of Mahometan tyranny and Mahometan imposture ! That country, once the most distinguished soil of the Western Church, has now the sad distinction alone, that she is the only land where Christianity has once flourished, in which it has been totally extinguished. We cannot pass over a subject which thus forces her fate on our minds, without offering a prayer for her restoration, without suggesting a caution to watch and pray, lest our own high privileges be likewise forfeited.

Cyprian fully rivalled his earlier compatriot in his intellectual and theological attainments, and was far happier in sound discretion of judgment, which preserved his faith unadulterated by any spurious additions of fanatical delusion. Yet he ever regarded the memory of his distinguished predecessor with high respect ; he was frequent in the study of his works, and always asked for them with the phrase, “ Give me my master.”

In Carthage, his native city, he early attained high reputation in literature, and became a distinguished professor of rhetoric; but he is said in his youth to have been free in morals, and was then a warm opponent of the faith to which he afterwards devoted his faculties and sacrificed his life.

The zealous labours of the presbyter Cæcilius, were blessed to his conversion, and in his baptism he adopted the name of this his father in the faith. The reception of that holy rite under such circumstances appears to have been usually accompanied by the full development of that new principle of spiritual life, of which it must ever form the sacramental sign. In his very interesting Epistle^a to his friend Dona-

^a This Epistle begins with a graphic description of the scenery of the gardens in which he had enjoyed many religious conversations with his friend. These gardens were probably the same which are connected with the history of Cyprian in a very interesting manner; they had been his own property, but some time after his conversion he sold this estate with all the fervour of primitive charity, that he might have the means of distributing more largely to the poor. They had, however, again been restored to him, apparently by his Church after he became

tus, who then presided over the Carthaginian see, the new convert has given a most striking portrait of all the mighty change which then passed over his soul. “Receive,” saith he, “that which must be felt, before it can be learnt, and acquired not by long and laborious study, but by the compendious process of ripening grace. While

Bishop of Carthage, and he was finally placed under arrest in these very gardens by the proconsul Galerius Maximus, previous to his martyrdom. In the passages abridged and condensed in the text it will be seen, that Cyprian speaks of his baptism as having conveyed not only potentially the seminal principles of the Christian graces, but as having been accompanied by their actual and complete development; but we must remember, that he is speaking as to his own baptism as an adult, under circumstances which implied real conversion of the heart. He proceeds to offer a very striking picture of the sinful and suffering state of the unconverted, by supposing his friend and himself to ascend a lofty mountain, and thence to cast a glance around over a world lying in misery and guilt. He forcibly portrays the various scenes they survey, the cruelty of the gladiatorial spectacles, the licentiousness of the dramatic exhibitions, the immoral scenes presented in their domestic retirements, the public abuses of the forum, the turmoil of the ambitious, the wealthy, and the powerful; and with all this he contrasts the true peace of Christianity, “*una igitur placita et fida tranquillitas, una solida et firma et perpetua securitas.*”

I yet lay in the dark night, tossed amidst the waves of a worldly state, I conceived it hard and difficult to believe that a man could be born again, and animated to a new life at the salutary font. *Quid impossibilius aiebam quam tanta conversio ; ut repente ac perneciter exuatur quod vel genuinum situ materiæ naturalis obduruit, vel usurpatum diu senio vetustatis inolerit ?* But when washed in these regenerating streams from the stain of my former life, light shone from above into my cleansed breast. A new faith made me indeed a new man ; doubt forthwith settled into faith ; that which was closed became opened ; that which was dark clear ; that which was difficult easy. Thou also well knowest and canst acknowledge from thine own experience, all that this death to sin and new life unto righteousness hath removed from our souls and all that it hath conferred. Nor is this boastingly spoken of any virtue of our own, but of the gift of God alone ; that we have now ceased to sin is entirely of faith ; our human weakness was shewn in our former sins.

Dei est, inquam, Dei omne quod possumus. In him we live, in him we are strong ; from him we derive all our vigour, and while yet placed here, gain some indications of our future privileges.”

The Carthaginian Church, observing the ardour and ability of the new convert in propagating the faith which had been so effectually brought home to his own soul, gladly admitted him into the ministry ; and marked their sense of the manner in which he discharged its functions, by elevating him after no long interval to their Episcopate^b. But the star of his high ecclesiastical office rose and set amidst storms. The Decian persecution^c burst forth in all its fury very shortly after he first assumed a post, then rather of preeminence in danger than in dignity ; and within eleven years he fell a martyr under the sword of Valerius^d. Almost the whole interval was a scene of perpetual difficulty and embarrassment, for the storm of external oppression produced waves of disturbance within the haven where the vessel of the

^b A. D. 247.^c A. D. 249.^d A. D. 258.

Church itself was riding, still more painful to those who were charged with its guardianship and guidance. Placed under these trying circumstances, Cyprian displayed virtues of mind fully equal to the arduous duties which devolved upon him. In the midst of these days of suffering and rebuke, he was indefatigable in his endeavours to alleviate every distress, and to reform every disorder. Though forced by the violence of the persecution to a temporary secession from Carthage itself, thus shewing that his religious system was free from the extravagant and suicidal notions of the Montanists ; yet the great motive of his retirement appears to have been not his own personal safety, but his persuasion that he should thus best consult the utility of his Church, by placing himself in a situation whence he could most effectually minister to all its exigencies. We find these motives fully explained in a most interesting Epistle from him to the Clergy of Rome, between whom and the African Churches the warmest sympathy appears to have prevailed. He here assures them, that though absent in

body, he was present with his Church, not only in spirit, but in act. And thus we shall indeed find him watching with an eye of constant vigilance over all their concerns, supplying by his frequent letters counsel to his clergy, encouragement and comfort to those who endured the trial, and admonition to those who were ready to faint; he also addressed the most affectionate exhortations to those who had fallen away but repented of their weakness, to prepare themselves by a due course of contrition and humiliation to be readmitted to the privileges they had forfeited by their denial of the faith.

Many of the Epistles which under these circumstances he addressed to his Church are still preserved^e; and while we peruse

^e Ep. 20. Fell; 15. Pamel.; l. iii. E. 5. Erasmus. In many of the Epistles addressed to his Clergy from his retirement, he expresses the most anxious desire to return to them; and ascribes his reluctant absence solely to his regard for the common safety. *Opportet nos tamen paci communi consulere, et interdum quamvis cum tædio animi nostri, deesse vobis, ne præsentia nostri invidiam et violentiam gentiliam provocet.*" Ep. 7. Fell; 36. Pamel.; iii. 24. Erasmus.

them, we must feel carried back in a very affecting manner to the primitive, and as we may call them the heroical, ages of our faith, and see laid open to us the very expressions in which the actors in these scenes communicated to each other their trials and their consolations, their hopes and their anxieties.

The most important and interesting remains of Cyprian consist of his Epistles, of which more than eighty have been preserved. They are addressed not only to his own Church and province, but also to several successive Bishops of Rome, or to the Presbyters of that Church, when deprived, as in that season of persecution occasionally happened, of an Episcopal superior; and to many other Churches, especially of the Spanish and Asiatic provinces. In the wide circuit of this correspondence we see equally illustrated the diffusive sympathies which then so closely united the most remote Churches, and the extensive influence which belonged to the personal character of Cyprian, who, we are informed by his Deacon and biographer,

was commonly denominated *Christianorum omnium Papa*. The Epistles themselves are invaluable to the ecclesiastical historian, as exhibiting the most exact image of the form and pressure of the times. Contemporary Epistles, indeed, must ever afford the clearest and most interesting illustrations of historical records, for they are, as it were, the perpetuated living voice of the actors themselves; and the present collection is rendered affecting and edifying to the Christian scholar, by the deep tone of piety which breathes throughout. Yet will it be found too often as painful in one point of view as gratifying in another; for we fondly cherish high imaginations in our hearts, of the general purity and unmingled piety of those early ages of the Church; but a study of these Epistles will fearfully dissipate these pleasing impressions. In some of the parties, indeed, thus brought before us, and especially in Cyprian himself, we shall find all the genuine traits of true and undefiled religion; but we shall be constrained to hear him in deep humiliation lamenting, that the great and general declen-

sion of his Church had fully required the sharp corrections which its Lord, in permitting the sword of persecution to be unsheathed, had seen it good to inflict^f. We shall perceive, that a spirit of intrigue and faction already infected too many of the clergy themselves, and we shall see the most serious attacks on the regular discipline of the Church, not only made by the inconstant and lapsed, but sanctioned even by Confessors, who permitted the consciousness of suffering in the cause of righteousness, to inflate them with spiritual pride, and persuade them that they had thus acquired a just influence to which every other authority ought to succumb.

^f De Lapsis, p. 123. Fell. and Ep. x. 13. Fell. It has lately been fashionable with the opponents of Establishments, to attribute all the corruptions which insinuated themselves into the Church to the patronage of Constantine; but it is impossible to read the Epistles of Cyprian, (those especially which relate to the proceedings of Novatus Felicissimus and Novatian,) without perceiving, that these moral taints had already fearfully infected the atmosphere, even while the thunder storms of persecution might have been expected to have purified it, and long before the Imperial sword assumed any other position, with regard to the Church, than that of being directed against it in exterminating hostility.

Other and still worse enormities are recorded in the Epistle to Pomponius, to which I would now only thus distantly allude. We can only say, that these unfavourable features, like the crimes of the eminent men recorded in holy writ, at once afford the strongest attestation to the uncorrupted fidelity of the record, and impress us with an humbling sense of the infirmity of our common nature.

The few separate Treatises Cyprian has left us, partly relate to the same temporary and local circumstances, affecting the state and discipline of the Church which form the subject of his Epistles; and will be conveniently included in our rapid survey of the most important of those transactions. Of the Treatises which bear a more practical and general character, many may, undoubtedly, from their deep piety, afford matter of edification, but can scarcely require a detailed examination in a general outline like the present; for it would throw little additional light on his character as an important link in the chain of Patristical authority, if we were to analyse his argu-

ments, while by the warm inculcation of appropriate but yet familiar and obvious Christian topics, he directs his Church, as he saw most requisite in her various duties. In this he closely followed the steps of his forerunner and model Tertullian, and has left us duplicates, as it were, of most of the practical Treatises we have before noticed of that Father. The mere titles of these will sufficiently explain their character and objects for our present purpose; *De Vanitate Idolorum*, *De Patientia*, *De Zelo et Livore*, *De Eleemosynis*, *De Habitu Virginum*, *De Exhortatione Martyrii*, *De calamitatibus*, *De Mortalitate*, *De Oratione Dominica*.

The style of these writings has been highly praised by Lactantius^s for its perspicuity, facility, copiousness, elegance, and persuasiveness. It is certainly far superior to that of his master Tertullian in fluency, but we desiderate the point and vigour which in his writings so often shine forth in the midst of his obscurity.

I now propose to submit to your notice

^s Lactant. Institut. l. v. c. 1.

such a brief survey of the leading points discussed in his Epistles, and more strictly ecclesiastical Treatises [§], concerning the history and discipline of the Church ^h, as may appear sufficient to illustrate the character and influence of this Father, as one of the leading authorities of that Catholic body in the third century.

I have already noticed the different classes of firm and lapsed or apostate Christians, both of whom in this more ostensibly militant age of the Church, equally called for the attention of the Bishop who watched over

[§] Viz. those de Lapsis, and de Unitate Ecclesiæ.

^h He most earnestly urges his clergy to supply his place in these respects, and gives them most sensible directions to join prudence with their zeal in the discharge of an office, which might else have provoked a more furious rage of persecution.

“Atque utinam loci et gradus mei conditio permetteret ut ipse nunc præsens esse possem: promptus et libens solenni ministerio, cuncta circa fortissimos fratres nostros dilectionis obsequia complerem; sed officium meum vestra diligentia representet.” Ep. 12. Fell. “Tamen caute hoc, et non glomeratim, nec per multitudinem simul junctam puto esse faciendum; ne ex hoc ipso invidia concitetur, et introeundi aditus denegetur; et dum insatiabiles inultum volumus, totum perdamus.” Ep. 5. Fell.

them in the Lord. For the former class of faithful and resolute confessors he had to provide, that they should receive every support from the constant visitations of their clergy ; that every practicable means should be resorted to, to relieve all their necessities; and especially that the gloom of their dungeons should be cheered by the enlivening light of Christian consolation and hope.

Cyprian, by his letters, was eminently successful in thus supporting and animating the confessors not only of his own Church, but also those of Rome, then deprived by the persecution of their own prelate; and they in return acknowledge his Epistles as their chief solace amid the general desolation spread around them, and the great means, under the Divine grace and providence, of encouraging them to persevere in the hope of the destined crownⁱ. Many of these Epistles of Cyprian^k are still ex-

ⁱ Ep. 31.

^k Ep. 6. addressed to Rogatian, Sergius, and other Carthaginian confessors. Ep. 10. congratulating the confessors on the constancy of the martyrs. Ep. 31. and 37. correspondence of Moyses and other Roman confessors.

tant; they breathe the earnest desire of his soul that he could be personally present to share and sooth their trials; and convey the strongest assurances that he was ever with them in heart and spirit, and never forgot them on any occasion of prayer,

Ep. 58. addressed to the people of Thibarîs, a city of the African maritime district of Zeugitana. This last is the most copious and interesting of these Epistles; he here urges, in consolation of those whom the persecution had driven into solitary flight, "*Solus non est cui Christus in fuga comes est. Solus non est, qui templum Dei servans, ubicunque fuerit sine Deo non est.*" Another Epistle (76) was written to the martyrs condemned to the mines. Cyprian also addressed two of his Epistles, Ep. 60, 61. to two successive prelates of Rome, Cornelius and Lucius, on their exile and sufferings for the faith, to which shortly after they bore testimony with their blood. Among the extant Treatises of Cyprian, there is also one addressed to Fortunatus, *de exhortatione Martyrii*. This is almost entirely made up of a most copious collection of every passage in Scripture which relates to the danger of being betrayed into idolatry; the claims of the Saviour on our entire devotion; the perseverance which alone could win the palm and the crown; the former examples of religious constancy, and the infinite superiority of the glory to be revealed to the sufferings of the present time. The treatise *de bono Patientiæ* also contains much suitable to such times. The subjects of these Treatises correspond with two of Tertullian's, but they are much simpler in style, and more copious in scriptural illustration.

whether public or private. He not only encourages them by the most powerful appeals to the high motives of Christian hope ; but he also faithfully performs the more delicate task of warning them, that the glory of the struggle in which they were engaged could never dispense with the perpetual obligation of the deepest humility, and that the prize of martyrdom could never consist with the slightest impurity of heart or life¹.

From this consideration of Cyprian's intercourse with his brother soldiers in that noble army of martyrs which he was so soon himself to join, we have to turn to a case every way involved in far more painful considerations ; his anxieties with regard to the proper treatment of those weaker brethren who had bent before the storm, renounced directly or indirectly the name of the Lord who had bought them, and polluted themselves either by actual or implied participation with the sacrifices of the heathen^m.

¹ Ep. 13.

^m There were two classes of these lapsed brethren, the *Sacrificati*, who had actually participated in the idolatrous sacrifices; and the *Libellatici*, who had purchased certifi-

Cyprianⁿ, when permitted to return from his retirement, most feelingly contrasts his gratitude for the restoration of peace to the Church, and for the glorious constancy of her martyrs, with the sorrow occasioned by these timid desertions.

In those temporary calms, during which the Church had rest for a season, many such defaulters were most anxious to be restored to the privileges of a faith, from avowing which they had shrunk through infirmity of resolution, not through weakness of conviction.

A painful controversy soon arose as to the terms on which these *lapsed* brethren, as they were called, were again to be admitted into the bosom of the Church they had forsaken in her hour of trial. Three different lines of conduct with regard to this question were recommended by as many parties. Those who embraced the

cates from the corrupt magistrates, that they were unsuspected of the proscribed faith, and were thus exempted from the necessity of publicly assisting at the sacrifices; but these libels or certificates proceeded on the ground of an implied denial of Christianity.

ⁿ Sermo de Lapsis.

more liberal and indulgent extreme, advocated the immediate reception of such penitents on their first professed desire to return. The opposite extreme of severity gave no place to repentance, though sought earnestly with tears; but considered a single act of apostacy as incurring *de facto* the sentence of irreversible exclusion. A middle course (which in this as in the generality of moral questions we may fairly esteem to have been the discreetest and best) was recommended by the counsels of the mild and pious Cyprian°. He held, that such a

° In his Epistle to the brethren of his congregation, (*fratribus in plebe*,) E. 17. Cyprian pathetically expresses his anxious but tender feelings on this subject; “*Ingemiscere vos et dolere ruinam fratrum nostrorum ex me scio, fratres carissimi, qui et ipse pro singulis ingemisco pariter et doleo; et patior, ac sentio, quod beatus Apostolus dixit. ‘Quis infirmatur,’ inquit, ‘et ego non infirmor? Quis scandalizatur, et ego non Uror?’ et iterum posuit in Epistola sua dicens, Si patitur membrum unum, compatiuntur et cætera membra. Compatior ego, et condoleo de fratribus nostris, qui lapsi, et persecutionis infestatione prostrati, partem nostrorum viscerum secum trahentes, parem dolorem nobis, suis vulneribus intulerunt. Quibus potens est divina misericordia medelam dare; properandum tamen non puto, nec incaute aliquid et festinanter gerendum; ne dum*

defection had indeed incurred a serious crime; and required, as did all crimes in that age of strict discipline, a due course of penitential humiliation, before readmission could properly be granted to the full privileges of the holy society so weakly deserted. Those who would submit to this discipline were to be welcomed back to the table of their Lord with all joy; and should fresh persecution arise, Cyprian urged in a synodical Epistle^p, written in his own name and those of his clergy, that this probation should be abridged or dispensed with; and that the spiritual food which might best strengthen the returning penitent against the future trials to which he might be exposed, should at once be again accorded to him.

In this age it is certain, that none will approve the harsher extreme; but many perhaps will incline to that of the most

temere pax usurpatur divinæ indignationis offensa gravius provocetur."

These principles are fully developed in the *Treatise de Lapsis*. The *Epistles*, from 15 to 36, also principally relate to this subject.

^p Ep. 57.

lax indulgence; and condemn even Cyprian as having drawn the line too strictly. Yet when we take into consideration the high anxiety of the Church in that age, to preserve in its outward and visible communion the same characters of purity and holiness which essentially belong to its spiritual nucleus; we cannot surely blame the scruple to readmit such vacillating professors, without some previous trial, calculated to put the sincerity and strength of their desire of reunion to the proof. Had such weakness generally been tolerated, there would have been little hope, (so far as the instrumentality of second causes is concerned,) that the Christian Church would have been preserved in that spirit of firm though calm and passive heroism, so essential to its coming out more than conqueror from that great fight of afflictions which assailed its early progress.

The conduct of Cyprian also in the whole of this matter is marked by one feature which cannot but speak most strongly in its favour. He throughout scrupled to issue any determination on the subject

from his own judgment alone; and declared his desire to remit its decision to the public Synods of his Church, which appear to have included its lay as well as clerical members. He will take no step, he says, *sine petitu et conscientia plebis*^a.

The embarrassments arising from this question were fearfully aggravated, as affording a convenient handle to a spirit of schism, which then unhappily began to intrude itself into the Church. From the period of Cyprian's unsought elevation to the Episcopate, the ambitious Novatus, who had coveted that dignity, nurtured a bitter jealousy, and sought every occasion of vexatious opposition. He eagerly availed himself of this discussion concerning the readmission of the lapsed; and endeavoured

^a Ep. 64. To the same effect in Ep. 14. "A primordio Episcopatus mei statuerim, nihil sine consilio vestro, et sine consensu plebis, mea privatim sententia gerere." Again, Ep. 19. "Hoc enim disciplinæ omnium nostrum convenit, ut Præpositi cum Clero convenientes, præsentem et *adstante plebe* quibus et ipsis honor habendus est, disponere omnia consilii communis religione possimus." And Ep. 34. "Cum hæc tractanda sit et limanda plenius ratio non tantum cum collegis meis, *sed et cum plebe ipsa universa.*"

by advocating the cause of extreme indulgence to secure popularity to his own party. In these proceedings he found a fitting associate in Felicissimus, an individual of the same disorderly temperament; and these together entered into the most seditious cabals against the authority of Cyprian; they even gained such an ascendancy, as encouraged them to attempt to procure the election of Fortunatus, another member of their faction, to the see, as if it had been vacated by the retirement of its prelate.

The principles which Cyprian laid down for the regulation of his conduct under these trying circumstances, while they were marked by the proper firmness of a vigilant ruler of the Church, were no less distinguished by that mild temper which formed the prevailing character of his disposition. He was ever ready to throw open the door to those who could be made sensible of their error, while he strenuously resisted every effort to force a way into the Church by threats and violence^r. The advice which he gave

^r Ep. 59. p. 138. (Fell.)

to a brother Prelate, exposed to the same schismatical annoyances, he ever practised in his own person; “ We should prefer to overcome the injuries we receive by patience, than to avenge them by sacerdotal power^s. ”

The same question which had thus disturbed the Carthaginian Church, led at the same period to a similar but more formidable schism in that of Rome; where, on the occasion of filling up the see which had remained for a short time vacant during the late persecution in consequence of the martyrdom of Fabian, a double election took place. Cornelius was declared Prelate by the majority who had embraced the same moderate views with Cyprian; but the party who contended for the stricter extreme, refused to recognise the validity of his appointment, and proclaimed their own chief, Novatian, as the rightful Pontiff. It is only necessary for us to mention this schism, from the anxious efforts which Cyprian made to

^s Ep. 3. p. 7. (Fell.) *Magis enim optamus et cupimus contumelias et injurias singulorum, clementi patientia vincere quam sacerdotali licentia vindicare.*

compose it. The majority earnestly sought for the support of an opinion to which so much weight was so justly attached ; and his influence appears to have been warmly and effectually exerted on the side of Cornelius^t.

Cyprian, whose notions on the subject of ecclesiastical unity were, as we learn from his Treatise on that subject, of the highest order, held, that as there was one Church, so also there was one Episcopate^u, all the individual members of which ought to regard themselves as the component parts of a connected whole ; and should therefore cooperate together with the closest sympathy and identity of purpose. He undoubtedly appears to have considered the See established by St. Peter at Rome, as the central point of the unity of the Church^x, (I am not now advocating his opinions, but merely stating them historically;) and he

^t See Ep. 44 to 55. ed. Fell.

^u De Unitate Ecclesiæ, p. 108. ed. Fell.

^x See De Un. p. 106. compared with Ep. 59. p. 131. Petri Cathedra Ecclesia principalis unde Unitas Sacerdotalis exorta est.

therefore readily conceded a primacy of rank, but as steadily denied any thing approaching to a supremacy of authority, to the occupant of that see^z. He indeed strenuously contends, that St. Peter himself never claimed any such authority^a.

The absolute independence of the Episcopate of every separate Church, was a point strongly insisted on by Cyprian. “None of us^b,” he declares in a speech to one of his provincial councils, “ought to make himself a Bishop of Bishops, or assume a tyrannical authority over his brethren; for each individual Bishop is at liberty to decide according to his own judgment; and as his judgment cannot bind others, so neither can the judgment of others bind him. Every Bishop is free to conduct himself as he sees fit in the administration of his

^z Hoc erant utique et cæteri Apostoli, quod fuit Petrus; pari consortio præditi et honoris et potestatis. De Un. p. 107.

^a Nam nec Petrus, cum secum Paulus disceptaret, vindicavit sibi aliquid insolenter, aut arroganter assumpt; ut diceret se primatum tenere. Ep. 71. p. 195.

^b See Annales Cypriani, pp. 54, 56.

own Church, for which he is accountable to God alone."

These principles were strongly brought out in some controversial discussions which occurred between Cyprian and Stephen, who succeeded to the see of Rome on the martyrdom of Lucius. The present occasion will not require me to dwell on these disputes. They partly related to the usurpation by Rome of an appellate jurisdiction over other sees, as shewn by the attempt to restore certain Bishops of Gaul and Spain who had been canonically deprived for heresy and misconduct. But the principal cause of dispute arose from the question, whether Baptism administered by heretics should be admitted as valid by the Church, or whether in this case a repetition of the rite were requisite. It is somewhat curious to find, that in this controversy the Church of Rome took the more liberal side; while Cyprian, supported by those of Carthage and of Cappadocia, warmly advocated the more harsh and exclusive opinion.

It is needless to add, that the general

consent of the Western Church, at a later period, confirmed the judgment of Rome. Whatever our views may be as to the merits of the question itself, it is impossible not to feel, that the contrast between the conduct of Cyprian and Stephen is altogether favourable to the former; for the Carthaginian Bishop invites every member of his Synod to declare his opinions freely, and strongly discountenances every idea of separating from communion those who might differ; while the Roman Pontiff substitutes authority for argument, and excommunication for persuasion. This controversy might possibly have proceeded to more violent lengths, had not an imperial persecutor, Valerian, soon drowned it, by mingling the blood of both the principal disputants in the stream of common martyrdom^c.

^c It is somewhat remarkable, that Stephen was the fourth successive occupant of the Roman see, who thus closed a brief pontificate by laying down his life for the faith, and his successor Xystus or Sixtus added a fifth to this constellation of martyrs. The list and dates of their martyrdoms stand thus; Fabian A.D. 251, Cornelius 253, Lucius 255, Stephanus 257, Sixtus 259; all within eight years. Although we must regret to find too plain symp-

By far the most interesting point connected with this controversy, is the strong declaration which it called forth of Cyprian's judgment on the subject of tradition. Stephen, in support of his own opinion, had alleged the authority of ecclesiastical tradition. To this Cyprian thus replies, "But from whence is that alleged tradition derived? Doth it descend from the authority of the Lord and of his Gospels? or cometh it from the epistles and precepts of the Apostles? For God attesteth, that the things *which are written* are to be performed; and proposeth this rule to Joshua, when he saith, ' ^dThe Book of this Law shall not depart from thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate in it day and night, and observe to do all the things that are written therein^e.' Custom without truth is but the antiquity of error."

toms of that haughty and encroaching spirit, which afterwards gained so fearful an ascendant in that Church, already beginning to manifest themselves, yet it were unjust to close our eyes to the high and holy constancy which then distinguished its prelates.

^d Josh. i. 8.

^e Ep. 74. p. 211.

“ But there is a very compendious method for religious and simple minds to lay aside error and to detect truth; for if we return to the head and original source of divine tradition, all human error ceaseth, and the analogy of the sacred and heavenly doctrines being distinctly disclosed, whatever lay hidden and obscured beneath mists and clouds of darkness, standeth revealed in the light of truth.”

“ If the canal which conveyeth water, and which once afforded a large and liberal supply, should suddenly fail, must we not ascend to the very fountain head, there to ascertain the cause of the defect? Whether from the drought of the springs the stream is exhausted at its source, or rather interrupted in its continuous course by the defects of the leaky and broken canal; in that case the canal must be repaired, that the water may be supplied for the use of the city in all the abundance and integrity with which it issues from its source.”

“ And even thus must the priests of God now act and preserve the divine

precepts, so that if in any point the stream of truth fluctuates and vacillates, we must return to trace it to its first source, to the discourses of our Lord, and to evangelical and apostolical tradition;” that is, to the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, which are clearly thus designated. “Thus must our practical rule be ever drawn from thence, whence its order and origin first took rise.”

It is obvious, that in this case Cyprian never for a moment suspected any failure in the divine source of inspiration, and that he would practically call our whole attention to correcting the defects of the human channels which conveyed its streams^f.

^f In his Epistle to Cæcilius, (Ep. 63. Fell,) in reprobation of a custom which had crept into some Churches in employing water in the place of wine as one of the Eucharistic elements, Cyprian strongly expresses his disapprobation of traditions not resting on a scriptural foundation. *Quare si solus Christus audiendus est non debemus attendere, quid alius ante nos faciendum putaverit, sed quid, qui ante omnes est, Christus prior fecerit. Neque enim hominis consuetudinem sequi oportet, sed Dei veritatem. Cum per Esaiam prophetam Deus loquatur et dicat ‘sine causa autem colunt me, mandata et doctrinas hominum docentes; et iterum*

Cyprian's views, indeed, as to the complete sufficiency of the Scriptures as the great storehouse of Christian doctrine, are indisputably evidenced by his three books entitled *Testimonium*, which entirely consist of a regular digest of biblical texts, so arranged as to present a general summary of Christian faith. These, as the title indicates, he considered as forming the great testimony to the truth.

Built on such a foundation, the faith of Cyprian distinctly recognized the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. "This," he exclaims, "is our God. This is Christ, who, as the Mediator between two, put on the nature of man, that he might bring him to the Father^s." On the great subject of the Divinity of our Lord, it were indeed sufficient to refer to the second book of Cyprian's *Scriptural Testimonies*. The principal argument of the whole

Dominus in Evangelio hoc idem repetat,' dicens 'Rejicitis mandatum Dei ut traditionem vestram statuatis.' Cyprian in this Epistle quotes to the same purport all the strongest texts, condemning the introduction of another gospel beside that once for all delivered.

^s De Vanitate Idolorum.

of that book is to demonstrate this doctrine by the most copious accumulation of all the texts which appear to have any reference to it. Most assuredly no fault of omission can be charged against this selection; the only objection to which it may appear liable is quite the reverse of this, namely, that we find some of the texts cited from the Old Testament strained and forced from their plain and literal interpretation, according to that mode of typical exposition which we have so often seen reason to regret.

It may be added, that in very numerous passages of Cyprian's Epistles, our blessed Lord is expressly described under the title "Jesus Christus Dominus et Deus noster."

Cyprian is equally explicit in his attestation to the great doctrine of the Atonement. "The Son of God disdained not to take our flesh, that he might make us the sons of God; and, sinless himself, might bear the sins of others^b. An access lies open to the clemency of God, and to all that seek and understand the truth that access is

^b De bono Patientiæ, compared with de Eleemosyna.

easy. Christ hath imparted to us this grace, he hath bestowed this gift of his mercy, by subduing death on the trophy of his cross, by redeeming the believer with the price of his blood, by reconciling man to God the Father, and by quickening our mortal nature through heavenly regeneration. He throws open to us the path of life, he restores us to paradise, and will conduct us to his heavenly kingdom. Made by him the sons of God, with him shall we live and rejoice eternally, as those that are redeemed through his blood, as Christians glorified together with Christ, and as the blessed of God the Fatherⁱ.”

Cyprian strongly insists on the original corruption of our nature, as forming the necessity for infant baptism; he describes it as a deadly contagion contracted by our descent from Adam^j; and, in the citation before given from his Epistle to Donatas, we have already seen him adverting to the

ⁱ Close of Address to Demetrian, p. 196. Fell.

^j Ep. 64. p. 161. Fell. Qui recens natus nihil peccavit, nisi quod secundum Adam carnaliter natus, contagium mortis antiquæ prima nativitate contraxit.

innate obduracy and pollution of our natural constitution, no less than to the habitual inveteracy of actual crimes long persisted in.

He dwells, however, more largely on the effects of sanctifying grace than justifying faith; yet he faithfully recites the texts on which this doctrine reposes^k, and those which prove that we have nothing whereof we can glory, since we have nothing of our own, nor any power unless received from above^l.

His doctrine of the Sacraments attributes the highest importance to them as the efficacious means of grace. In the very commencement of our account of this Father, we have seen the high spiritual efficacy he attributed to the sacrament of Baptism in his own case; and he generally defines it to be the nativity of all Christians^m, by which

^k Testim. i. 5. De Mortalitate, p. 157. Ep. 63.

^l Test. iii. 4.

^m See the whole argument of his Epistle to Pompeius (Ep. 74. Fell,) on the invalidity of heretical baptism. He, however, appears to consider the proper efficacy of the sacrament to have consisted in the remission of original guilt, and the actual gift of spiritual grace to have been rather conveyed subsequently by the episcopal

the new man is formed in their souls, and they become fit to receive in Confirmation the gift of the Holy Spirit. Although the language he has used, with regard to his own experience of these renovating graces, is such as can be justly applied only to an adult and perfectly developed mind, he yet bears the fullest testimony to the general reception of infant baptism in the Church. He has recorded, in a synodical Epistleⁿ, the judgment of a council of sixty-six African Bishops, over which he presided, with reference to this point; from this it appears, that the only doubt then entertained on the subject was, whether the administration of this rite ought not, in pursuance of the analogy with Circumcision, to be restricted to the eighth day.

imposition of hands. He mentions, together with many of the rites of baptism which we retain, the practice of unction, which the discretion of our own Church has dropped. He also admits baptism by affusion instead of immersion, when administered to those of infirm health; this was called clinical baptism, as it was thus administered only to those obliged to recline on their couches; but the principle of admitting this variation on the score of health, appears fully to justify our own practice.

ⁿ Ep. 64. Fell.

This question was decided in the negative, and an earlier performance of the ceremony was allowed whenever it might be judged expedient.

I need not repeat, that Cyprian strictly confined the power of conferring this sacrament to the orthodox Church alone.

Of the Eucharist he expressly declares, that the elements were *imago sacrificii Christi in pane et vino scilicet constituta*, and his language almost uniformly implies a figurative and symbolical representation and commemoration of the sacrifice of our Lord^p; he also explains the use of the material signs employed, by the analogy of the physical effects they produce in nourishing the body, to the spiritual efficacy of the grace they convey to the soul.

^p See particularly Ep. 63. to Cæcilius, against the corrupt custom of substituting water for wine in the Eucharist. In this Cyprian adduces many fanciful parallels from the Old Testament, which he believed to prefigure the Eucharist; e. g. Noah drinking wine, Melchisedeck setting forth bread and wine to Abraham, etc. Few probably will agree in considering such passages as typifying this sacrament; but it is obvious, that such interpretations must proceed throughout on figurative grounds.

In my concluding Lecture, I shall have occasion to remark on the custom of the Church in the time of Cyprian, to admit infants to the participation of the Eucharist.

Thus far we have contemplated the character of Cyprian, as a governor and teacher of the Church. As a bishop, we have seen him firmly maintaining the just authority of his order, as the surest safeguard against destructive schisms ; but yet ever administering its powers with the most temperate discretion ; resolute against the violent and factious, but indulgent to the weak. Meekly seeking on every important occasion the assent and advice of the clergy and people of his own Church ; while the general Christian body, even in its remotest provinces, looked up to his name as to that of its most distinguished leader, in that day of difficulty and danger ; and anxiously sought his counsel with the most deferential respect. In these more extended relations, Cyprian, while he endeavoured to combine the entire Catholic body in the unity of harmonious co-operation, was still ever careful to guard the

just independence of the various members which constituted its combined strength.

As an instructor, we find his doctrines in satisfactory accordance with those embraced as orthodox by our own Church; and like her he builds them up not on any uncertain tradition of men, but on the sure *testimonies* of the word of God.

In some things we may have indeed been pained to observe, that the ritual observances of the Church, as described in these Epistles, had already begun to decline from their first venerable simplicity; and that some practices, which were but too well calculated to open an inlet to subsequent superstitious abuses, had already crept in. Nor can Cyprian himself be exonerated from all share in these; but in that balance of advantages and disadvantages, inseparable from a condition of imperfection, some luxuriant offsets of more rank vegetation may spring forth amidst the very growth of genuine religious zeal; and this will more especially be likely to occur, when the minds of men are harassed by constant alarm, anxiety, and danger.

Cyprian also repeatedly adverts to his

conduct, as having been influenced by visions and monitions, which he regarded as supernatural intimations vouchsafed for his direction ; but it may well be questioned, whether it does not but too much savour of a tendency to scepticism absolutely to deny, that the faithful servants of God may still, in that age of arduous struggle, have been distinguished by some more direct manifestations of a protecting Providence, than are required in ordinary and tranquil periods. At all events, the dwelling on such impressions cannot be aggravated into any more serious charge, than a natural and common infirmity of judgment.

If we turn to the works of charity, which Cyprian so warmly inculcated in others^r, we shall find him anxious practically to exemplify his precepts by his own conduct. We have an interesting illustration of this in his Epistle to the Numidian Bishops^s, many

^r See his tract de Eleemosynis. In one or two passages, the language of this tract assumes an incautious warmth, and seems almost to imply, that he considered such acts as meritorious, and available to the atonement of offences.

^s Ep. 62.

of whose flock had been carried into a cruel slavery by an irruption of the fierce barbarians, who bordered on that province ; we here find recorded not only affecting expressions of his deep sympathy, but we see the sincerity of his feelings proved, by the activity with which he collected large and liberal donations throughout his Church, to assist in procuring their ransom.

The wide wasting pestilence, which, in the age of Cyprian, ravaged so large a portion of the Roman empire, called forth all his energy ; his biographer and deacon Pontius has left us an interesting account of his indefatigable exertions, in attending and consoling the sick and dying throughout the whole of this fearful visitation ; and he animated his Christian brethren to follow his example, in performing every office of piety and charity not only to those of the household of faith, but even to their heathen persecutors. The *Treatise de Mortalitate*¹,

¹ Ed. Fell, p. 5.

² Ed. Fell, p. 156. The vulgar superstition attributed all these calamities, the pestilences which desolated, the famines which wasted, and the wars which ravaged,

which he wrote on this occasion to diffuse the consolations of Christianity, must surely be read with deep interest by all who are capable of entering into the high and holy feelings it persuasively expresses, when it raises the dejected spirit to the prospect of that heavenly home, “where a large band of those who have preceded us, our fathers,

the empire to the wrath of the neglected Gods, whose fanes were more and more deserted from the rapidly increasing spread of the new faith. We have an interesting Treatise by Cyprian, in refutation of these opinions, addressed as an answer to one Demetrian, who had been active in propagating them. (Ed. Fell, 185.) Tertullian very readily retorts the charge, that if such calamities were indeed to be regarded as providential visitations, they might be ascribed with much more justice to the iniquities and cruelties of the heathens themselves; and although the Christians were indeed equally involved in them, he argues in a high tone of moral feeling, that the true measure of suffering must be drawn not from external circumstances, but from the internal emotions which these produced; and that in this respect no comparison could be drawn between minds fortified by a Christian steadfastness of faith and strength of hope, and the strangers to this heavenly support. “Viget apud nos spei robur, et firmitas fidei, et inter ipsas seculi labentis ruinas erecta mens est, et immobilis virtus, et nunquam non læta patientia, et de Deo suo semper anima secura.” Ad Dem. Ed. Fell, p. 193.

our brethren, and our children wait to greet our arrival. Secure in their own salvation, they are still solicitous for ours; but oh, how great shall be our common joy in that blessed reunion, in an eternal life that knows no further fear of death, in felicity alike supreme in degree and perpetual in duration!"

Cyprian was soon called upon to give proof in his own person of the same serene confidence of Christian hope which he had thus laboured to inspire in others; for in the year 256, Valerian was, by the evil influence of his infamous favourite, Macrianus, induced to lay aside the more favourable sentiments with which, in the earlier part of his reign, he appears to have regarded the Christian name, and to renew the edicts of persecution. At first, however, the storm fell more lightly on Carthage; and the proconsul, Paternas, was contented, after ineffectual menaces, to inflict no harsher sentence on its prelate than that of banishment to Curubis, a maritime village; and at the close of a year he was permitted to commute this exile for retirement, appa-

rently unmolested, in his own beautiful gardens, once sacrificed by his charity, and restored by the affection of his people. Hence, however, on the arrival of a new proconsul, Galerius, he was again summoned to his tribunal ; yet the spirit of the saint's own mildness seems throughout to have diffused its influence even over his persecutors ; and they appear to have discharged their office with reluctance, treating him with unusual gentleness, and admitting the free access of his friends. When the proconsul's announcement, that the most sacred emperors required him to join in the ceremonies, extorted only a firm but tranquil negative, he still continued to expostulate, " Oh, take better counsel to thyself." The answer is a remarkable instance of the brevity and calmness of Christian resolution, " Do that which is appointed to thee : so just a cause needs no counsel."

The proconsul's sentence was remarked by the Christians as unintentionally, but accurately, expressing the merits of the sufferer, and the results of his suffering. It described Cyprian as the standard-bearer

of his own party, and the most powerful opponent of the gentile polytheism ; and declared, that he should be made to serve as an example to his people, and that by the sanction of his blood discipline should be reestablished ! effects which, although not in the sense intended by his persecutors, his Church long experienced*. Weeping crowds kept watch throughout the night in the street of his confinement ; and when the morrow of his martyrdom arose with an unclouded brightness, like that of his own mind, they still followed him, and pressed around with melancholy eagerness, that they might be edified by the last moments of their venerable and beloved pastor, whose life had been consecrated to their service.

With this notice of Cyprian, we may close our rapid, but yet I would trust not unfaithful, survey of the principal remains of the Ante-Nicene Fathers ; for we cannot be called upon to include in this class the prolix Apologetical Treatises by Arnobius and Lactantius†. It is indeed very doubt-

* See Cyprian's Life by Pontius. Ed. Fell, p. 10.

† Jerome in his Chronicle has assigned the year 326,

ful, whether these were published before the æra of that celebrated Council ; and assuredly they cannot have preceded it by more than a very few years. In any general arrangement they will be most properly referred to the period which followed the establishment of Christianity by Constantine ; and, indeed, Lactantius commences his principal work by congratulating that emperor on his adoption of the true faith. Nor would the works either of the African or Bithynian rhetorician, be at all calculated to throw any additional light on the general character of ecclesiastical doctrine and discipline through the three first centuries ; the object to which I have purposely limited these Lectures.

The Fathers of the following century are by many considered as the most distinguished ornaments of the Christian Church ; and assuredly the age which boasted of Athanasius, of Basil, of the Gregories, of

(the next after the Council,) to the publication of the work of Arnobius *adversus Gentes* ; and Lactantius does not appear to have commenced his publications before the year 320.

Chrysostom, Jerome, and of Augustine, need not shrink from a comparison with the divinity of succeeding periods, either in talent, learning, spirit, or piety; but still these Fathers flourished after the Church had grown up to the maturity of complete establishment, and its doctrines had been authoritatively defined by the earliest of its œcumenical Councils. We can no longer, therefore, consult the subsequent writers, as illustrating the gradual progress of the Church towards the full stature which she had already attained; and although we may study their works both with interest and edification, we still can read them only with the same sentiments which would equally apply to the most eminent theological writers of modern times.

The natural limits of our subject will, therefore, obviously suggest the period at which we have now arrived, as the most appropriate for drawing to a close our examination of those earlier documents, from the collection of which alone we can ascertain the state and sentiments of the

Church in its first ages ; and I propose to devote the following final Lecture to the recapitulation of such general deductions, as shall appear to arise from the survey we have hitherto pursued.

The present Lecture I may most fitly close, with a few remarks on the circumstances which ushered in and accompanied the authoritative and public declaration of the genuine faith of the universal Church, to which I have adverted.

It is sufficiently manifest, that such authoritative declarations of the sentiments of any extensive body, can alone be promulgated by general conventions, in which its several members are fully and fairly represented. We do not, indeed, maintain, that such ecclesiastical Councils are privileged with any miraculous exception from possible error. It is little probable, that such a notion can be held as a theory, by those who have subscribed our twenty-first Article, or as a fact by those who are historically acquainted with their often conflicting decisions ; and we must therefore in every case regard

those decisions as requiring to be carefully tested, by a faithful collation with the sole infallible and inspired standard, the word of God, to be proved, as our Article expresses it, by sure warranty of Scripture.

Before the recognition of Christianity by the State, it was manifestly impossible that any such general synods could be convened; but we have now seen, from the Epistles of Cyprian, that in his time more limited provincial synods were the ordinary instruments of ecclesiastical government. And as the Churches of different provinces preserved a strict union, and maintained a frequent intercourse, it could at this time have been easily ascertained, how far the judgment of one Church was confirmed by that of others, from the interchange of their synodical Epistles. And even at an earlier age, before we possess distinct records of these provincial synods, we may be well assured, when we find Irenæus and Tertullian confidently appealing to confessions of the faith embraced by the whole Catholic Church, that adequate means of affording a demonstration of that general

consent could not have been deficient ; indeed we have historical information, that such Councils were held in the Roman and Asiatic Churches before the close of the second century. And as the Council of Jerusalem, convoked by the Apostles, and held under the regular presidency of St. James, the first Bishop of that city, afforded a sufficient model for such assemblies, we may well believe them to have prevailed from the very earliest times.

The matters discussed in the provincial Councils we have lately been considering, related, principally, to secondary points of discipline ; but the next controversies which called for such an interference were of an importance infinitely higher, and such as affected the very vitals of the faith.

As early as the close of the preceding century, we have seen Theodotus and Artemon, on the one hand, giving birth to that fearful heresy, which pronounces Him who was in the beginning with God, and was God, to be a simple man. We have also seen Praxeas falling into the opposite extreme of error, by maintaining, that the

divine nature of Christ was not only essentially, but also numerically and personally, identical with that of the Father.

Opinions very similar to these last were, during the progress of this century, advocated by Noetus and Beryllus in Arabia, and by Sabellius in Egypt. Synods were convened on these errors in the respective provinces; and we find Origen and Hippolytus engaged in the confutation of the former, and Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, is recorded as the most distinguished opponent of Sabellius. But by far the most important discussions on these points were those which arose about the year 270, from the heresies advanced by the notorious Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, a Platonizing theologian, who maintained Christ to be in his own nature a mere man, although he allowed that a portion of the divine Spirit had descended upon and presided in him.

The character of this Prelate must be familiar to the general reader, because his pride, luxury, and want of principle, have been eagerly seized by the sceptical histo-

rian of the declining empire; who, in his usual tone, would fain insinuate, that he was in these points the fair representative of his Episcopal brethren, although in truth we are acquainted with his excesses only because they are adduced by those very brethren as the heaviest aggravations of his guilt. Relying on the support of Zenobia, the royal mistress of Palmyra, whose masculine energy for a time succeeded in converting her tributary rule into independent sovereignty, he fearlessly broached his heretical opinions, and defied the censures of the Church; but when Aurelian succeeded in wresting the sceptre of the East from the female grasp which for a time detained it, the impediments which had obstructed a just ecclesiastical jurisdiction were removed^z; and a Council

^z The Christians appear, from the time of Valerian to that of Diocletian, to have enjoyed the repose of a perfect toleration, and to have been permitted publicly to erect churches for their worship. On this occasion, we accordingly find the Catholics of the district fearlessly appealing to the equity of the heathen Emperor for the restoration of their churches, from which Paul had unjustly excluded their clergy, in contravention of their

was convened at Antioch, the patriarchal city of this province, to pronounce a regular sentence. The Prelates there assembled acted with equal calmness and firmness; and before they proceeded to his condemnation, addressed to Paul an Epistle still extant, in which they demanded a categorical answer. In this they present the fullest and most precise declaration of the Catholic faith of the Church, on the important doctrine of the Trinity. It is a most important and valuable document, and forms a very appropriate introduction to the confession of the Nicene Fathers, with which it entirely agrees in spirit, although a discrepancy of expression occurs on one point, which in a later stage of the controversy acquired an importance not at first perceived to belong to it^a.

general decision. Aurelian, in order to obviate the suspicion of local partiality, transferred (to use a legal phrase) the hearing of the cause to the clergy of Rome, who at once confirmed the deposition of Paul, and the election of his successor Domnus.

* This Epistle may be consulted in the second volume of Routh's *Rel. Sacræ*. The discrepancy from the Nicene confession alluded to in the text is this. It

As the Syrian Bishops transmitted their decision to their brethren of Rome, and received from them the warmest expression of assent, we may consider this document as equally conveying the sentiments of the East and West. Passing over some intermediate Councils, held on matters of discipline of minor importance, we will at once proceed to close our survey with that of Nice, which has ever been regarded as forming one of the greatest æras in the history of the Church.

About the year 315, Arius, a young, speculative, and ambitious catechist of the Alexandrian Church, began to disseminate his peculiar opinions concerning the nature of Christ; which, while they do not in words deny his divine character, yet de-

appears that in a part of those acts, not now preserved, but referred to by Athanasius, Basil, and Hilary, that the Council of Antioch scrupled to apply the term *ὁμοούσιος* to the relation of the Son to the Father. But in reality that they were led to this, only as refusing to admit certain metaphysical consequences, which the sophistry of Paul attempted to deduce from the employment of this term, and not from any objection to the sense in which it is used by the Nicene Fathers.

prive him in effect of many of those attributes, which appear essential to our first conceptions of the idea of Deity. For surely we cannot conceive of the Godhead as other than eternal, nor of the Divine nature as capable of division; and if, therefore, we assert the Son to be God, while we deny him to be coeternal with the Father, and partaker of one and the same Divine essence, (the true import of the term consubstantial^b,) we surely must regard the Father and the Son as two distinct spiritual natures, the one properly divine and supreme, the other only so termed in a lower and improper sense. We then, in fact, suppose two Gods, the one superior, and the other inferior; and by the addition of the Holy Spirit, the Arian hypothesis will present us with a complicated system of subalter-nate Tritheism.

It may be said, indeed, that the terms

^b Much metaphysical discussion as to the sense in which the term *ὁμοούσιος* was used, will be found in the Epistle written by Eusebius from the Council to the Church of Cæsarea, of which he was Bishop, as preserved in Socrates. i. 5.

employed by the Catholics are introduced, not from Scripture, but from questions of transcendental metaphysics, which our faculties can never grasp. But when we reflect on the consequences, which, as we have seen, obviously result from the attempt to evade such definitions, we must surely perceive the necessity of adopting some precise expressions of this nature, as inseparable from the elemental conceptions of our minds concerning the Divine nature ; and as our only safeguard against conclusions, from which these conceptions teach us to revolt. The general history of the progress of Arianism, fully illustrates the downward tendencies of that creed. Its ever-varying shades are but as the uncertain hues of the chameleon. In some of its highest phases, perhaps, its difference from the Catholic doctrine may seem little marked ; and appear to consist in distinctions almost inappreciable, and in intangible points of the most subtle and abstruse metaphysics. But if we look practically at the natural consequences and results of once entering upon this line, how very

few are the wandering steps, that are ever seen to find ground on which they can repose, at such a stage ; how seldom is the career of declension at all arrested, until the lowest levels of Socinianism, which at first setting out perhaps would have seemed the very valley of despair, are fully and finally reached !

An indiscreet and intemperate opposition to the Sabellian hypothesis of a merely modal Trinity, was probably the leading cause which first seduced Arius into this contradictory extreme of error. A similar predisposition may have prevailed at the time in the minds of many other theologians ; and these opinions, when promulgated by the activity and talents of Arius, soon gained a considerable number of adherents. The harmony of the Alexandrian Churches was disturbed ; and the then Bishop, Alexander, having first tried in vain the effect of private admonition on Arius, brought his opinions before a regular synod of the neighbouring Bishops and Presbyters. The sentence of the majority decreed his expulsion from the Church, but

a considerable minority seceded with him. Bishop Alexander appears to have sustained throughout the character of a candid, moderate, and impartial judge^c.

Arius, encouraged by the numbers of his party, maintained a congregation which must now be considered as schismatical. He even succeeded in persuading some of the Bishops of Asia Minor and Syria to embrace his cause, and their local councils were prevailed on to interfere in his behalf. The sensation thus excited soon spread to Rome; and there attracted the anxious attention of the imperial convert to Christianity^d.

It were surely to trespass on the province of the ecclesiastical historian, were I in these Lectures further to trace the steps by which Constantine was led, in his solicitude to appease the agitations, which could not in that day convulse the Church without sensibly disturbing the empire, to convene the celebrated Council of Nice. I will only, as fully illustrating his motives and temper in

^c Sozomen, i. 15.

^d Euseb. Vita Constant. ii. 64.

this measure, briefly quote his inaugural address in opening that assembly. “Pity it were,” said he, “that now our enemies are subdued, we should differ and become divided among ourselves; and far less excuse can there be for such disputes among men, *who have for their sure guide the doctrine of the Holy Ghost himself recorded in written documents. For the writings of the evangelists and prophets, and the oracles of the ancient prophets, clearly teach us how we ought to think of God*^e.” On concluding this speech, the emperor is said to have placed on the table in the midst, the sacred volume, to which he so emphatically appeals as the only authoritative standard of faith.

All the historical circumstances connected with this Council, will not, I think, permit us to doubt, that the Creed it adopted delivered to posterity a fair, faithful, and unbiassed representation, of the faith which a great majority of the Christian Churches recognised, as having been established among them from the beginning.

^e Theodoret, Hist. Eccl. i. 7.

I need not dwell on the great importance, considered as a matter of simple testimony, of the decision so pronounced by the voice of the united Church. It is not that I would insist on that voice as possessing in itself any independent authority ; I speak of it only as delivering the faith, which the Church had herself first received, only as attesting the sense, in which she had from the beginning been taught to interpret the Scriptures. I claim alone, that this her interpretation shall be received, in proportion as it shall be found, by the strictest examination, in perfect accordance with the general harmony of the faith recorded in the Scriptures of truth, the enduring oracles of God, so remarkably placed before her on this occasion as her only sure guide. But when the most conscientious and scrupulous comparison with the only sure word of inspiration, has convinced us that these things are indeed so ; then it is surely most satisfactory to every holy and humble mind, to enter into the full spirit of the ancient and sublime Liturgical hymn retained by our Church ; and to know, that when we

acknowledge God the Lord as conjointly the Father everlasting, his equally everlasting Son, and the Holy Ghost the Comforter, our confession is exactly the same in which from the beginning the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, and collectively the holy Church throughout all the world, hath ever acknowledged him.

LECTURE VIII.

EPH. iv. 11, 12.

And he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some evangelists ; and some pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ.

IN the Course of Lectures now drawing to its close, it has been my object to present, for the assistance of younger theological students, such a general survey of the principal extant ecclesiastical writings of the three first centuries, as might afford my hearers sufficient materials to form their own judgment, with regard to the true value and just application of these interesting and important relics. And assuredly the Lecturer would escape the most delicate and difficult portion of his task, could he consider himself as having discharged the

whole of his obligation, by thus fairly and faithfully placing the case before his audience ; leaving the just inferences to their own decision. But he must feel, that something beyond this is still due ; and that the candid expression of his own general views, and of the conclusions which this survey has impressed on his own mind, will be naturally and justly expected, and even required, from him. I shall now, therefore, endeavour to answer that call ; but assuredly it will be with feelings of humble diffidence, far remote from every thing like a hard spirit of dogmatical assertion, that I must enter on such a task.

The sacred truths of religion are, by all of us within these walls, regarded as infinitely the most valuable, and most certain portion of our knowledge ; and the subject of discussion now before us, relates to the media of proof which may be the best calculated to establish our faith, in those things of which we feel ourselves most assured. To intermeddle, therefore, rashly and presumptuously with topics so intimately connected with the very foundation of our

faith and hope, were little consonant to the dictates of a prudent judgment, and still less to the feelings of a pious spirit.

These media of proof, from which we collect the assurance of religious truth, may be many and various ; some of them may be considered as principal and self-authoritative, others as dependent and subsidiary ; but all are calculated to yield a mutual and combined support to each other, and were doubtless designed, by that Providence which has supplied them all, to afford by this union a more extended and consolidated foundation for the fabric of our faith.

If I may so apply my text, the inspired apostles, first in place, and supreme in authoritative mission, and as their faithful dependents and disciples, the subsequent evangelists, pastors, and teachers of the Church, were in the counsels of the Divine wisdom appointed for this very end, that they might cooperate together towards perfecting the saints, and edifying the body of Christ.

If we overlook these things ; if we neglect

the strength accruing from the due combination of all our materials ; if we suffer ourselves to be betrayed by that partial and exclusive bias, so apt to intrude in every controversial discussion, and proceed to array the harmonious though varied elements of truth, as if they were the irreconcilable principles of contradictory systems ; let us beware lest the edifice we are rearing, being divided against itself, should be less able to stand ; and we should thus incur the risk of seriously injuring, by our unadvised dissensions, that great and sacred cause we are all equally anxious to support.

This danger cannot be avoided, should any fancy they can only establish in its just rank some favourite class of proofs, by the uncandid depreciation of all beside ; if, for instance, the parties who would wish to inculcate a high respect for the cherished remains of the primitive Church, should injudiciously and irreverently appear to assert, that without appealing to these, it were impossible to discern the truth of God by the light of his own revelation ; or if, on the other hand, a just jealousy for the suprem-

acy of scriptural authority, should induce any of us to throw aside with contempt the strongly corroborative evidences which may be deduced from the diligent study of Christian antiquity; the results will be, in either case, such as must afflict the best friends of truth, and can afford gratification only to our common adversaries. Much, therefore, must we lament, if any, in advert-
ing to that holy band of saints and martyrs, our first forerunners in the faith, should, instead of striving to apply to edification all that is excellent and sound in their remains, delight rather to expose with scorn the error and infirmity inseparable from any work of man; and permit themselves to argue as if the instructors of the Church, in the ages nearest to her origin, were more likely to lead into error than truth; who must not see, that from a controversy so conducted, the sceptic can alone derive the probable advantage? Who must not fear, that in entering himself on such a subject, he may be betrayed into some of those unadvised modes of expression, which he perceives to be the *εὐπερίστατος ἀμάρτια* of those

who engage in similar discussions. Deep self-diffidence, and serious prayer for the effectual guidance of the Spirit of truth, can alone preserve our steps from the errors and cavils we deplore.

It may seem extraordinary, perhaps, that while we assert religious faith to be a sure principle, and the truths which it embraces to be those most certainly impressed on the conviction of our reason, it should yet remain in any degree a subject of controversy, what are the media of proof by which we become assured of those truths. But if any think that the sceptic may erect his batteries on this as on a formidable vantage ground, it would be enough to remind them, that even the most demonstrative portions of human science are by no means exempt from similar controversies. The mathematician well knows, that the exact nature and foundation of the evidence, on which the first links of his continuous chain of argument depend, have been the subject of similar discussions. And if these have attracted less notice, and been conducted with less warmth, it is

only because the truths at issue were so infinitely less calculated to bear upon any important points, in which our highest interests and dearest affections were concerned.

In taking a general survey of the evidence we have been considering, I would frankly avow, that every step in the historical enquiry has tended more and more to convince me, that the only rock sufficiently firm for faith to anchor itself upon is the Bible itself. To all uninspired documents, however venerable, we may apply the sound and discriminating judgment of Augustine, when, in speaking of the works of Cyprian, he observes, “ We do them no injustice in placing a wide distinction between them and the Canonical authority of the Divine Scriptures; for it was not without cause that this apostolical Canon was constituted, with so salutary a caution; that none of us should dare to judge of it, but that from it we should freely judge of all other writings, whether of infidels or of the faithful. In every other instance we may esteem the author’s

genius, we may draw delight from his eloquence, we may admire his charity, we may venerate his constancy in martyrdom; but if he has said any thing contrary to this standard, we can in no way receive it^a."

It were indeed mere tautology to maintain, that the mind of the Apostles can be delivered through no other channel so securely as by their own pens and under their own signature. But although the Bible be the sole *primary* source of our faith, and the only absolutely *authoritative ultimate standard* of appeal, most injudicious and self-sufficient should we

^a Augustinus contra Cresconium Donatistam, lib. ii. p. 430. Ed. Benedict. Nos enim nullum Cypriano facimus injuriam cum ejus quaslibet literas a Canonicâ divinarum Scripturarum auctoritate distinguimus. Neque enim sine causa tam salubri vigilantia Canon ecclesiasticus constitutus est, ad quem certi Prophetarum et Apostolorum libri pertineant, quos omnino judicare non audeamus, *et secundum quos de cæteris literis, vel fidelium, vel infidelium libere judicemus.* Nunc vero quoniam Canonicum non est quod recitas; ea libertate ad quam nos vocavit Dominus, ejus viri cujus laudem assequi non valeo, cujus multis literis mea scripta non comparo, cujus ingenium diligo, cujus ore delector, cujus caritatem miror, cujus martyrium veneror, hoc quod aliter sapuit non accipio.

shew ourselves in undertaking the office of interpreters of that Bible, did we neglect or undervalue the light to be derived from tracing out, so far as we may be able, the doctrinal consent of the earlier and purer ages of the Church. We cannot, indeed, ascribe to our inferences from such archæological researches, the same primary place or plenary authority that we yield to scriptural testimony. But as secondary and subsidiary means in the elucidation of scriptural truth, we would pursue their study with all diligence, and with all gratitude for the valuable aid so afforded.

But the first foundation must still ever be laid in Scripture; and I cannot regard as other than most injudicious, the arguments which have been sometimes adduced against the adequate sufficiency of scriptural testimony; as, for instance, when Vincentius Lirinensis^b, arguing from the difficulties suggested by the sublime sense of the divine oracles, and the often conflicting opinions of their expositors, draws this conclusion, “Therefore, under so great difficulties, and

^b Comm. c. 2.

in such a perplexity of various error, I hold it extremely necessary to apply the sense of the Catholic Church *as a rule to a line*, and as the clue to conduct us in this labyrinth of opinions.”

It must ever be the great misfortune of all similar arguments, that there is not one of them which does not admit of being retorted with far greater force against the proposed substitute, ecclesiastical tradition. I will appeal on this head to the very advocate of that tradition whom I have just quoted. In what strong terms does he himself describe its very general corruption, as early as the reign of Constantius. “Then^c,” he tells us, “the Arian heresy had infected the whole Christian world, and almost all the Bishops of the Latin Church;” and he adds, that “the only safeguard was to prefer the ancient faith before the recently introduced corruption.” But how may we ask could that ancient faith be correctly ascertained? Had an appeal from the Latin Bishops, thus stigmatized by Vincentius, been made to their im-

^c Comm. c. 6.

mediate predecessors, might not the party appealed against have justly urged, that those to whom the reference was made, stood in no other line of authority as the witnesses of apostolical tradition than themselves? In order, therefore, to arrive at any safe or satisfactory conclusion, must not the appeal have been prosecuted upwards and upwards, step by step, till it could securely rest for its ultimate decision only in the original apostolical documents, as received by the common consent of both parties? In stating this, I surely exactly agree with the sentiments of Basil, already cited in the close of my introductory Lecture, that the sole award of religious truth is and ever must be vested in the Bible itself.

But in saying thus much, I would carefully guard against being supposed to undervalue the very important *subsidiary* aid to be derived from researches into the catholic opinions of the primitive Church. Those opinions, if truly catholic and primitive, must, of course, be themselves of apostolical origin and authority. It must be evident, however, that the Bible, and the Bible alone, possesses these

characters of primitive antiquity and catholic reception in the highest degree. In every other case we must be left to depend on the collection of probable arguments of far inferior weight ; still, nothing hinders but that we may be able to arrive at a degree of probability highly satisfactory to a fair enquirer ; and I need not add, what a powerful corroborative evidence may be thus afforded, to the conviction that our minds are really reposing in the security of truth. For if we have first carefully and candidly examined the scriptural testimony, and if in applying ourselves to such an enquiry, we have sought by earnest prayer to be guided into the truth, in such a case there is undoubtedly much ground for an humble trust, that we shall be graciously preserved in a right interpretation of the mind of that Spirit on whom we sincerely depend. But still, we must ever remember, how much the treachery of our hearts may even in these things deceive us ; that all human judgment must be fallible, and that although grace to assist it is promised, still we are not entitled to hope for any miraculous suspension of its

weakness in our own individual case. Under such feelings, what a powerful and comforting support to the mind anxious for truth must it not be, to find that the interpretation of the scriptural record, which it has been thus led to embrace for itself, is in strict accordance with that which it sees the best reason to conclude has been entertained by the Christian Churches, as early as we are able to trace their sentiments.

Thus, two independent lines of enquiry being found to converge in the same result, our confidence, that we have rightly conducted both those enquiries, must on every principle of evidence be most materially increased. Our private judgment has, indeed, been equally the instrument by which we have conducted either enquiry ; for this must guide us in determining genuine tradition, no less than in ascertaining the correct sense of Scripture. But when both trains of investigation evidently coincide, private opinion assumes the character of catholic consent ; and both must ever coincide in fact ; for catholic and primitive truth, as delivered from the beginning to the

Church, can never really differ from the revealed record of that same truth; nor can I believe, that any apparent discrepancies will be found, by any mind which has pursued such enquiries with candour and faithfulness, at all calculated to excite embarrassment or distrust. I would never then disunite, but I would strenuously urge the combination of both processes. I regard scriptural authority as the sole foundation of the fabric of our faith, but the study of Christian antiquity as one of the supporting buttresses on which its stability most materially depends.

Before we proceed to consider more particularly the principles which appear to result from our previous investigations, I may premise the following general remarks.

The true value and application of the Christian Fathers, whose remains we have been considering, must be found not in their individual character, but in the joint testimony which they bear as the general witnesses of the common consent of the Catholic Church in their day; but still it will be impossible for us rightly to distinguish

between their private opinions, and those which we may conclude them to have derived from the Church, without taking into account all the circumstances of their character and history as individuals. At first sight, for instance, a consent of many Fathers, such as we find to the dæmonological theories of Justin, to the literal interpretation of the prophecies of the Millenium, and the very extended application of an allegorical system of interpretation to other parts of Scripture, might seem to infer the catholic consent of the Church (of their day at least) in these views ; but when we observe the wide influence of the Alexandrian and Platonizing schools in disseminating such principles, we are at once able to account from other causes for their prevalence, as the private opinions of a single though numerous class ; and to consider the silence of the Fathers of the apostolical period, and the rejection of these views by some of the ablest ecclesiastical writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, as negating the idea of their *general* reception at any period by the Church. Before, therefore,

we can from such channels satisfactorily ascertain the really catholic sentiments of the Church, we have much and difficult previous investigation which will demand our attention. We must carefully examine the individual character and position of each witness whose testimony we examine. We shall also, in many cases, have another preliminary obstacle to surmount, in fixing what that testimony really was, by the accurate distinction of genuine documents from the forgeries so unhappily common. I do not in the least wish to exaggerate these difficulties, or to represent them to be such as may not by proper diligence be so far surmounted, as to afford a very satisfactory degree of probability to the results obtained. But when we find, in the arguments against the sufficiency of Scripture, similar difficulties (although in that case they assuredly only exist in a very inferior degree) brought against the hope of success in the direct interpretation of holy writ; we cannot but feel, that it is injudiciously attempted to exalt a weaker at the expense of a stronger evidence, and that a fearful risk is incurred

of undermining the very foundations of our faith.

In summing up the general results which the survey I have undertaken has left impressed on my own mind, I shall advert, in the first place, to the character of the several classes of Fathers we have reviewed, as it bears upon the nature and value of their testimony; and, in the second place, I shall mention the leading points to which that testimony may be applied.

In the earliest Fathers, who immediately succeeded the Apostles, we have seen indeed the pure and unadulterated truths of Christianity stated in all their native simplicity; but the genuine remains of these holy and venerable men are few and brief. And they are not only conceived in the very *spirit* of the evangelical Scriptures, but contain little more than a *repetition* of *the very scriptural text*; they enforce the same truths in the same words, but far less copiously than the original, so that they can in no respect advance any thing like a claim to be considered as independent or additional authorities, nor can they be con-

sidered as affording any other aid towards doctrinal exegesis than this ; namely, that they shew, by the nature of the points to which they most prominently advert, their own impressions as to what was the most important portion of Christian doctrine.

The next order, the philosophical Fathers, present the doctrines of Christianity under such a garb, as they would naturally assume in such minds. Without any intention of wilfully colouring or adding to the truths received, it is still almost impossible, that those truths should not receive some peculiar tinge from the general intellectual habits of the mind embracing them. In minds therefore trained in the schools, and accustomed to invest all their ideas with philosophical explanations of their causes and modes of existence, the new truths they imbibed from Christianity would necessarily undergo a similar mental process. It is quite unnecessary to add, that the explanations thus suggested are always devoid of authority ; that they are mostly misapplied to subjects, which it entirely transcends the limits of our present facul-

ties thus intimately to comprehend, define, and explain ; that they tend to encumber the simple truths of the Gospel with incongruous additions ; and that, in proposing to solve difficulties, they often introduce inextricable perplexity. We have also seen the tendency of this school, before the close of the third century, to degenerate into the most serious corruptions.

Still, as these philosophical explanations must, in the first place, have been of necessity accommodated to the doctrines of Christian truth as generally received, they will undoubtedly serve as a testimony to point out what those acknowledged doctrines were, however in other respects they may or may not merit our approbation. Thus, for example, the over curious speculations as to the mode of the intercommunion of the Divine nature between the Father and the Son, must assume, as generally conceded, the fact, that some such communion did really exist.

Of the more dogmatical Fathers of the Western Church, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Cyprian, I think it may be justly said, that

the most valuable result of their writings consists in the very complete attestation they have given to the scriptural canon. Their quotations are so very numerous, that if our Bibles were lost, and we were to reunite the fragments preserved in these three authors, we should from these alone be enabled to form an idea, by no means inadequate, of the detailed structure, and all the most important contents, of the sacred volume itself. Neither can we hesitate to receive these Fathers as competent and valuable witnesses of the sense in which the Church generally received the texts they thus cited. The prevailing subject, however, of the works of two of these Fathers, will preclude any very extensive application of them to the controversies which may agitate the Church in the present day ; since the works of Irenæus are exclusively devoted to the refutation of the delirious imaginations of the Gnostics, which have long ago passed away from the Church, like as a feverish dream when one awaketh. And the greater part of the writings of Cyprian relate to points of

discipline, which have mostly ceased to have any direct bearing on the state of any portion of the Church, in our own times. The works of Tertullian are, undoubtedly, far more discursive and general ; but still we must surely hesitate, as to what degree of reliance we can place on the fanatical advocate of Montanism, and the strenuous opponent of infant baptism.

Having thus considered the characters of the great classes of writers, whose remains have descended to us from the three first centuries, we may next examine the principal theological points to which those remains may be applied.

I have already noticed the great importance of their testimony to the canon of Scripture. It has, indeed, often been repeated, since the observation originated with Augustine, that we receive the Bible only through ecclesiastical tradition. And this is indeed true with reference to the external and historical evidence of its authenticity ; but in the same sense we might likewise say, that we receive any classical author only through classical

tradition. I do not, however, mean to insinuate a doubt, that in the former instance a far higher and holier guarantee is afforded; higher, because the structure of the Churches and their wide dissemination was in every way calculated to confer on their testimony a degree of security almost infinitely superior; holier, because arguing from the trust expressly declared to have been vested in the earlier Church of Israel, we cannot hesitate, by parity of reasoning, to conclude, that to the Christian Church in like manner the care of the oracles of God was providentially committed.

With regard to the interpretation of these Scriptures, much deference, although by no means implicit submission, must appear justly due to the authority of the early Churches. We cannot, indeed, be called upon to yield our assent to that excessive system of allegorical exposition, so generally applied to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, although it may boast the sanction of a numerous band of Fathers from the second century downward, because to this we may oppose the absence of

any such tendency in the genuine writings of the earlier apostolical Fathers. And we have seen full proof, that it originated not in Apostolical, but in Judaical and Alexandrian tradition. But in the exegesis of the New Testament we have no similar deductions to make, to diminish the value of the assistance which the early ecclesiastical writers are calculated on so many accounts to afford, in guiding us to a correct determination. This we must, indeed, feel, even if we regard that assistance merely in its lowest light, and look upon it as only presenting to us the philological and historical elucidations of early scholiasts, whose date was nearly contemporary with that of the original authorities, who spake the very language in which the original documents of the faith were written, and who were familiarly conversant with all those peculiar forms of society to which they allude. But here, again, we must surely acknowledge, that in the importance of the testimony it affords, this early ecclesiastical tradition rises far above that which we have denominated classical tradition. For we cannot

with any probability suppose, that the light originally diffused from the beacons kindled by the Apostles themselves, had become so suddenly and so generally extinguished through all the Churches, as not to have reflected many a ray on the pages of their successors, to the third and fourth generation.

Compared with the divines of later ages, both parties will be found respectively to have received different peculiar advantages, balanced by peculiar disadvantages, from him who divideth severally unto all, the gifts of each as he will. The ancient Fathers claim, indeed, a nearer proximity to the original teaching of the Gospel, but then this very proximity cast their lot in an age when that Gospel was only commencing to spread abroad its general improving influences over the mental aspect of the societies submitted to its operation. We have, indeed, been thrown on a period more remote from the first beams of the Day-spring from on high, but then our own later times have consequently been disciplined and prepared by the long establish-

ment of Christian principles ; and it were ungrateful to Him, whose bounty bestows all our lights, to depreciate the superior habits of judicious criticism, which under these fostering circumstances have grown up among us. Still were it little consistent with the spirit of Christian meekness to assume, that we, from our boasted superiority of intelligence, derive powers for enabling us to judge of the mind of the Spirit necessarily and greatly transcending theirs, who received the words of that Spirit so much more fresh from their primary revelation ; and who were supported by his power to witness a good confession even unto death.

From the general principle of interpretation, we may turn to some of the applications of that principle. And first, with regard to the great doctrine of the Trinity, there I conceive we shall find the general consent of the Fathers to amount to the most direct and positive refutation of every thing tending to the most distant approach to Socinianism, but applicable only inferentially and indirectly against the higher

among the proteus forms of Arianism. The apostolical Fathers were content simply to hold that the Word was God, that he was the giver of grace, and the object of prayer^d. Their more philosophical successors, when they sought to illustrate the more obtruse points connected with the subject by various analogies, were apt to be betrayed into illustrations, which might easily be pushed into very questionable consequences. The error they were principally engaged in combating was the opinion of Praxeas and Sabellius, who ascribed to the Son a personal identity with the Father, and having never seen the antagonist heresy of Arianism developed in all its character and consequences, they were

^d The controversy concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit, and the insertion filioque in the Latin editions of the Nicene Creed, which afterwards divided the Eastern and Western Churches, was long subsequent to the period of which we have been treating; although it is quite certain, that this expression was an interpolation in that particular Creed, yet the testimony of the earlier Fathers will shew, that there was no innovation in doctrine, for they often indifferently describe him as the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of God.

often so unguarded in their expressions, as to leave too much opening for perversions.

On the whole we may well doubt, whether if of two enquirers into this high subject, the one were supplied from a well-digested common place book of the Bible, with all the scriptural texts bearing upon it; and the other, with a similar compilation of all the expressions of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, such as might be readily taken from Bishop Bull's great work; the former would not, in all probability, rise from the enquiry with a faith much more satisfactorily acquiescent in the truth, and an understanding much less perplexed and embarrassed by vain and frivolous speculations, than the latter.

With respect to those other doctrines, which, together with the revelation of a Trinity of Persons in the divine Unity, may be considered as the most peculiarly characteristic of our holy faith; namely, the alienation of our nature from its original purity, the atonement by the sacrifice of Christ, justification through faith in his blood, and renewal to holiness by his Spirit;

it will hardly, I conceive, be maintained by any, that these points are not much more clearly laid down in the sacred volume itself than any where else. And it has accordingly been uniformly found, that the simple student of the Scriptures has ever been the most deeply impressed with these truths, and the most zealous in maintaining them. It is, however, satisfactory to find, that the same views which our own reformed Church has embraced on these most important articles, were uniformly recognised by the early ecclesiastical writers who have passed in review before us, from Clemens Romanus to Cyprian. Many of the citations, already inserted in these Lectures, sufficiently evince this agreement; and he who wishes for farther satisfaction, has only to consult the more full and explicit writings of St. Augustine, and to trace out the references he often gives to his predecessors in the faith.

If the presumption and rash curiosity of man would endeavour to search out the first causes of the application to the soul of the saving graces thus defined, and would seek to pry into the hidden purposes

of the Divine counsels, he will only find in the earlier and Apostolical Fathers precisely the same expressions which occur in the writings of the Apostles themselves, and nothing calculated to render what is there left unexplained in any way more definite or precise. In both, the same description of the elect is bestowed on true Christians ; in both that term is applied in the synecdoche of charity to the collective bodies of whole Churches, just as are the terms denoting other Christian graces, such as ‘ holy,’ and ‘ faithful,’ and the like. But in both a designed silence appears to have been studiously maintained, which should discourage the unauthorized and unavailing attempt to scrutinize the original causes, known only to the secret counsels of God, why some alone attain these high privileges, while others fall short of them. Sufficient, indeed, has been distinctly revealed to assure us, (and this alone concerns us to know,) that the whole of man’s salvation must be ascribed exclusively to the free mercy of God ; but the whole of his condemnation to his own perverse refusal of those gracious

offers of mercy. Beyond this, revelation hath not lifted the dark veil which shrouds the whole subject.

From the publication of the writings of Justin in the middle of the second century, however, down to the close of the period we have examined, and indeed until the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius in the fifth century, almost all the Fathers, with one consent, strongly insist on the freedom of the human will, and pointedly argue against any opinions approaching to the fatal necessity of the Stoics. Whether we may agree with or differ from their arguments, yet I think it must be admitted, that they afford quite a sufficient negative evidence to prove, that no *contrary system* could have been considered as *authoritatively established* in the Churches of that day.

From this consideration of the doctrines of grace, as proceeding from God to man, we may next turn to the sacramental means, by which it has pleased the great Head of the Church to supply those graces to its members.

The Eucharist is undoubtedly represented in strong language by all the Fathers as the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and described as an unbloody sacrifice; but it seems equally clear, that their meaning in all these expressions is spiritual and not carnal. They appear, indeed, to have considered this Sacrament, not only as a symbolical commemoration of the sacrifice of our Lord, but in a still higher character as the effectual mean, through his grace, of applying all the benefits of his Passion to the soul of the faithful recipient. But here the whole efficacy is obviously spiritual, and addressed to spirit: they never seem to have had any idea, that any material change of the elements employed could be required to produce this spiritual effect^e.

* I would particularly refer to the justly and highly esteemed authority of the learned Bingham on this point, as confirming the above statement. See his great work on Ecclesiastical Antiquities, lib. xv. cap. 5. sect. 4. He there makes the following observations: "I shall content myself to say, that in fact the most eminent of the ancient Fathers have declared, as plain as words can make it, that the change made in the elements of bread and wine by consecration, is not such a

The more philosophical among them, indeed, would probably have had little inclination for the false metaphysics which could maintain, that while all the external

change as destroys their nature and substance ; but only alters their qualities, and elevates them to a spiritual use ; as is done in many other consecrations, where the qualities of things are much changed and altered without any real change of substance.” The author proceeds to give many citations from the Fathers to this effect, but perhaps the strongest he quotes is the following from Theodoret, Dial. I. t. iv. p. 18. ‘Ο γὰρ δὴ τὸ φύσει σῶμα σῖτον καὶ ἄρτον προσαγορεύσας, καὶ αὐτὸν πάλιν ἑαυτὸν ἄμπελον ὀνομάσας, οὗτος τὰ ὁρώμενα ΣΥΜΒΟΛΑ τῇ τοῦ σώματος καὶ αἵματος προσηγορίᾳ τετίμηκεν, ΟΥ ΤΗΝ ΦΥΣΙΝ ΜΕΤΑΒΑΛΩΝ, ΑΛΛΑ ΤΗΝ ΧΑΡΙΝ Τῇ ΦΥΣΕΙ ΠΡΟΣΤΕΘΕΙΚΩΣ. For he that called his own natural body wheat and bread, and on another occasion termed himself a Vine, he also honoured the visible symbols by the appellation of his body and blood, *not changing their nature, but adding grace to that nature.*

The sentiments of the Gallican Clergy, as late as the ninth century, are clearly expressed in the Tract of Ratramn, lately republished from Mr. Baxter’s press, and are in strict accordance with those of our own Church. This was in answer to the then moral views promulgated by Paschasius Radbert, which appear to have been nearly the same with those of the Consubstantialists. Transubstantiation can hardly be said to have assumed its definite form before the Council of Lateran in the twelfth century.

qualities, through which alone we are cognizant of matter, remain, the internal matter itself has undergone a total transformation; an hypothesis as uncalled for as unphilosophical; since it appears obvious, that no parties really intend to maintain, that the elements receive in consecration any change as to the relations they bear to, and the effects they produce on, the *material portion of the human frame*; but all equally refer the change of which they speak to the *spiritual grace*, which they have acquired the power of conveying to our own *spiritual portion, the human soul*. For, as it is admirably expressed in the striking passage cited in our own Homily^f on the subject from Eusebius Emisissenus, “ We are satisfied with *spiritual meats*; we look *with faith* upon the holy body and blood of our God; *we touch it with our mind*; we receive it *with the hand of our heart*; we take it fully *with our inward man*.”

The Fathers on this subject rather repeat than define or explain the words of Scripture itself; their language is not such as

^f 1 Hom. on this Sacrament.

can be considered as in any manner calculated to afford supplemental information, in addition to that which may be deduced from the original text. With regard to Baptism, the language of the Fathers is also in strict accordance with that of holy writ; for both concur in designating that sacramental font as the laver of regeneration; perhaps, some of the discussions which have agitated the Church on this subject might have been abated, if not avoided, had all parties sufficiently distinguished between the initiatory admission into a state of covenant, and the development of the graces belonging to that covenant; for it is obvious, that the very moment of our admission into such a covenanted state, must challenge to itself the original inchoation of all the privileges annexed to it; and although many baptized into Christ may yet, alas! remain unconverted to him in heart and soul, still, whensoever any of them shall put off the death of sin and become raised to a new life of holiness, they will necessarily refer to the covenanted mercies of God, the grace which thus becomes effectual to their souls; and of the

mercies included in this relation, they undoubtedly became heirs when first numbered among Christians at the font.

With reference to such expressions of the Fathers, as may appear to identify Baptism not only with the seminal germ, but with the full growth of grace, I would again observe, that the Fathers of the first ages of the Church, while it was yet as a new colony deriving its population rather from immigration than birth, were necessarily so familiar with the baptism of adult converts, that this would be naturally the prominent idea impressed on their mind, when speaking of this Sacrament. A great majority of the Fathers of the three first centuries themselves stood in this position, and even in the fourth and fifth, some of the most eminent writers had been converts from other creeds^f; and others, though the children of parents, on one side at least, Christian, had not received Baptism until full manhood^g.

In all such instances, we cannot doubt

^f Hilary, Gregory Nazianzen, Epiphanius, Arnobius, Lactantius.

^g Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine.

effectual conversion, and the full development of Christian graces, to have accompanied the first moment of admission into a religion, which could only have been embraced from deliberate conviction.

It has been often, but I think rashly, urged, that the Church must necessarily ground her vindication of infant baptism, rather on ecclesiastical tradition than on scriptural authority. I must, however, frankly confess, that to my own mind the scriptural argument, derived from the close analogy of the initiatory rites of the earlier and later covenants, has ever appeared to be by far the most convincing and satisfactory ; for Circumcision, like Baptism, was an outward and visible sign, typifying an inward and spiritual grace, the circumcision of the heart, of which surely a babe of eight days was no more immediately capable, than is the baptized infant of the fulness of the graces to which he is admitted. The parallel appears to me complete throughout ; and the express divine authority in the one case, fully sufficient to imply a similar sanction to the corresponding rite. Those

who should resist this argument, I should despair of convincing by the appeal to early tradition^b; because here, I must be aware,

^b The following testimonies are cited in Wall's work on this subject. Justin Martyr, in more than one passage of his dialogue, establishes a parallel between Circumcision and Christian Baptism; he also mentions many as having been made disciples to Christ, ἐκ παίδων.

Irenæus, in the passage cited Lect. V. maintains, that Christ must have borne every age of man, because men of every age had been regenerated unto him, infants, youths, adults, and old men. On this it is argued, that infants, therefore, must have been baptized; but a sentence of general rhetorical declamation is no very secure ground of proof. We have also other passages, in which he strongly maintains the doctrine of original sin as infecting the whole human race, (l. v. c. 19, 21.) and describes all as being naturally debtors, transgressors, and enemies to God, (l. v. c. 16.) and as being under the wound inflicted by the old serpent; (l. v. c. 19.) these are adduced as inferring, that this universal stain being common to infants, required in them the same sacramental remedy as in adults. We have many strong declarations from Origen. “*Requiritur quid causæ sit, cum baptismum ecclesiæ pro remissione peccatorum datur, secundum ecclesiæ observantiam etiam parvulis baptismum dari consuevit.*” Hom. viii. in l. v. c. 10. *Parvuli baptizantur in remissionem peccatorum.* Hom. in Luc. xiv. And in another place, Comm. in Ep. ad Rom. v. he adds, concerning this practice, *pro hoc et ecclesia ab Apostolis traditionem suscepit.*

We have before cited the authority of Cyprian's coun-

they would object to the passages I might cite from Justin and Irenæus, as affording indirect, remote, and not very conclusive inferences, rather than any positive testimony in favour of pædo-baptism, and contend, that the earliest direct allusion to the practice was presented by the hostile argument of Tertullian. And although I could perfectly to my own satisfaction rely on the earlier inferences, as supported by the positive and repeated declarations of Origen, within ten years after the objections of Tertullian, that such was the habitual custom of the Church, and might, in support of this, appeal to the Councils held under Cyprian less than half a century later; I must still feel the argument from tradition by no means more exempt from the possibility; and although, as we have seen, the baptism of the Fathers of the fourth century seems to have been so generally postponed in their own cases, yet Basil reprehends such procrastination. Gregory Nazianzen urges parents to give to their infants the seal, and the Trinity as the best *φυλακτηρίον*: and Ambrose also mentions infant baptism; and some consider it a sin to withhold it. In the controversy also of Augustine and Pelagius, both parties speak of infant baptism as the received and established custom of the Church.

bility of plausible cavil, than that from Scripture.

And when I referred to the authority of Cyprian, I might be reminded, that his sanction would apply equally to the administration of the other sacrament, of the Eucharist, no less than that of Baptism, to infants; and that this also prevailed from the third to the twelfth centuries, between which and the fifteenth it was generally abolished in the Western Churches. Now I must confess, I should find myself embarrassed in vindicating the consistency of these Churches, in retaining infant Baptism, while they rejected the infant Eucharist, unless I felt the decision in both instances to be supported by equally strong grounds of scriptural argument. And if we refer to Binghamⁱ, the great

ⁱ The practice of infant communion is repeatedly alluded to in Cyprian's Treatise de Lapsis. Some of the passages are mingled with particulars, over which, in reverence to his memory, we would willingly throw the veil of silence. It was in the following century warmly approved by St. Augustine and his contemporary, Pope Innocent, who argued from the universal application of the text, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and

authority on such points, we shall find him to rest his defence on such grounds alone.

drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” (John vi. 53.) The custom, however, appears to have fallen into disuse in the Gallican Church during the twelfth century, after having prevailed about 800 years; and was formally abolished under Odo, Archbishop of Paris, 1175. The Council of Trent also condemned the practice, Sess. 21. c. 4. yet allowed that the earlier Fathers might be justified in enforcing it, as having ‘*probabilem causam pro illius temporis ratione.*’ Bingham’s arguments against it (l. xv.) are the following: 1. Because it has no firm foundation in the word of God. 2. Because infants which are baptized, are in effect thereby partakers of the body and blood of Christ. 3. Because infants cannot do this in remembrance of Christ, which he required from all who should partake of this Sacrament. 4. Because there is the same analogy and agreement between the Paschal Lamb and the Lord’s Supper, as there is between Circumcision and Baptism. And an infant Israelite had a right to enter the covenant by circumcision as the seal of it, but he was not to partake the passover till he could ask his parents the meaning of the mystery. (Exod. xii. 26.)

Waterland has left a discussion on this subject, which can hardly be considered as equal to his general reputation. In his work on the doctrine of the Eucharist, he had acknowledged that his mind was altogether in a dubious state what side he should embrace on every point connected with this question. But he subsequently published a separate examination, in which he endeavours to shew, that the earlier practice of the Church was restricted to the admission of children of seven or ten

Another custom will probably suggest itself to us, which may be traced back to the Ante-Nicene period of the Church, and yet has been strongly discountenanced, although not, perhaps, absolutely prohibited by our own Church. I mean, prayer for the dead, which is well known to have been fully sanctioned in the writings of

years to this Sacrament, and that the alleged necessity that infants also should thus eat the body of Christ, as an indispensable condition of salvation, was a corruption not introduced earlier than the eighth or ninth century. I must confess myself to be little satisfied, that this explanation conveys the real views of the original writers. It is perfectly evident, that the case mentioned by Cyprian was that of an infant in the strictest sense of that expression. With regard to the admission of children of any age to the Eucharist, Waterland concludes, that "the ancients expressed their reverence for the Sacrament in a way suitable to their circumstances; but the moderns may express no less reverence for the same Sacraments in a way somewhat different, as circumstances are likewise different. They had their *prudential* reasons for their practice in their times, and we also have the like *prudential* reasons for a *different* practice in ours." These Italics are copied from the original; and surely we may well doubt how far it be safe to admit the principles of an Utilitarian philosophy, into the determination of such a question as the requisite qualifications for the participation of a Sacrament.

Tertullian, and less distinctly by Cyprian^k. The Anglican Church, however, has carefully obliterated every trace of it from her ritual, and never alludes to it otherwise than in terms of marked disapprobation; because she could discover no ground of scriptural authority on which it might rest, and had learnt from experience how naturally it introduced, and how inseparably it became connected with, the delusive figment of purgatory, so profitable for priestcraft, and so unprofitable for Christian morality.

^k Tertullian de Monog. c. 10. describes the Christian widow as offering oblations, for the peace of her husband's soul and his participation in the first resurrection, "*pro anima ejus erat, et refrigerium interim adpostulat ei, et in primâ resurrectione consortium; et offert annuis diebus dormitionis ejus.*" And in his exhortation to chastity, addresses the Christian widower as exhibiting to his deceased wife the same proof of posthumous affection. Cyprian in many at least of the passages cited from him on this subject, may rather be regarded as speaking of offering commemorative oblations of praise and thanksgiving for the martyrs, than of direct prayer for the dead; and this unobjectionable mode, of remembering those who have departed this life in God's faith and fear, our own Church has retained in the affecting conclusion of the prayer of oblation, in her Communion service.

In reference to the rites of the Church, however, there is one case which has often been pointed out, and with much justice, as a good example of the proper application of traditional evidence, and of its real value, when thus judiciously appealed to. I refer to the observance of the Lord's day. In this instance, we see the constant practice of the universal Church, concurring with and confirming the incidental notices in the Acts of the Apostles, which repeatedly describe the Christians as being assembled together on the first day of the week. Yet, in the New Testament itself, we find no such direct injunction to maintain the practice as a permanent institution, as would have convinced us that it was so intended, had not the uniformly continued practice of the Christian Church from the beginning, supplied the wanting link of the argument ; had we not seen, from the testimony of Justin, that in the age next succeeding that of the Apostles, the observance was thus established in every Church founded by them. But it must be unnecessary to remark, that the traditional pre-

scription of a ceremony, and inculcation of a doctrine, are quite different things ; a common and frequent ceremony has, in its nature and circumstances, an obvious tendency to preserve itself unaltered ; whereas doctrines, unless distinctly recorded in written testimonies, have an equally obvious tendency to become corrupt.

From the rites of the Church, we may proceed to her discipline and government ; and on these points also, the voice of early tradition will, on the principles we have just considered, assert a well-founded claim to our attention and respect. For it must be obvious, that, with reference to such practical circumstances, the general usages which we observe prevalent in the Church, from the earliest documents of its history, must form the best, if not the only commentary, on the incidental allusions to those usages contained in the apostolical writings. In the New Testament itself, indeed, we find the distinct orders of Presbyters or Deacons, set apart for their ministry by the imposition of hands ; and we find the title *Ἐπισκόπος* employed, but yet without

distinct evidence of its yet having acquired that restricted sense, which we find attached to it in the next age, as denoting the ecclesiastical head of districts, comprising many presbyters. All the proper functions, however, of the episcopal office, taken in this acceptation, we find expressly committed to Timothy and Titus, in the Epistles addressed to them. Hence we might naturally have inferred, that when these individuals were withdrawn, the same wants of the Church, which required their appointment, would have rendered it equally desirable that others should be substituted in their place. Still it might have been objected, that the premises were scarcely sufficiently positive and extensive, completely to establish our conclusion. But here the undeviating practice of the Catholic Church¹ takes up the cause, and assures

¹ The testimonies of Ignatius and Irenæus, as stated in the second and third Lectures of this Course, must carry the fullest conviction on this point. The earliest question, indeed, moved in the Church concerning the official superiority of the Episcopate, appears to have been that agitated by the disappointed ambition of Aerius, fifty years later than the period to which these

us, with a weight of evidence which no reasonable mind can resist, that the episcopal

Lectures have been restricted; viz. in the middle of the fourth century. We are acquainted with his opinions from their refutation by his contemporary Epiphanius, who, on this account, includes him in his catalogue of heretics. (*Adv. Hæres.* lxxv. p. 906.) It must be acknowledged, however, that one of the most accredited Fathers of the same fourth century, Jerome, speaks on this subject in a manner, not indeed calculated to shake our confidence in the apostolical antiquity of the institution, but yet to moderate the more excessive views, which have been advanced by some of its less judicious advocates. This Father, who, in his fondness for monastic seclusion, himself never accepted any higher office than that of Presbyter, vindicates the high claims of that order, as having been, in original institution, on the same level with Episcopacy. He thus writes in his *Commentary on Tit. i. 5.* καὶ καταστήσης κατὰ πόλιν Πρεσβυτέρους. (See ed. Paris. t. vi. p. 198.) Idem est ergo Presbyter qui et Episcopus. Et antequam diaboli instinctu studia in religione fierent et diceretur in populis, ‘Ego sum Pauli, ego Apollo, ego autem Cephæ,’ communi Presbyterorum concilio Ecclesiæ gubernabantur; postea vero . . . in toto orbe decretum est ut unus de Presbyteris electus superponeretur cæteris, ad quem omnis Ecclesiæ cura pertineret ut schismatum semina tollerentur. He proceeds, in order to prove the original identity of order, to cite all the texts of the New Testament, in which the titles Ἐπισκόπος and Πρεσβυτέρος appear to be indifferently applied.

He has also given the same statement and citation in

superintendence of her congregations was, throughout the early ages of the faith, ever

an Epistle to Euagrius, (ed. Par. t. ii. p. 623.) against certain Deacons who wished to place their own order on the same level with the Presbytery. He there adds, that in the Church of Alexandria, from its foundation by St. Mark till the prelacy of Dionysius, about the middle of the third century, the Presbyters had always instituted to the Episcopal office by election from their own number. He, however, fully concedes to the Episcopal office its preeminence of authority, and its peculiar functions of Ordination and Confirmation; and although he certainly ascribes its origin rather to the *consuetudo Ecclesiæ* than any immediate *Dominica dispensatio*, still he never denies, that its original institution, from whatever motive, proceeded from the Apostles themselves. This subject will be found fully and candidly discussed in that equally learned and liberal work, the *Irenicon* of Bishop Stillingfleet.

On the whole we may conclude, in the words of one of the most excellent Primates of our Church, so expressive at once of confidence in the justice of our own cause, yet of charitable allowance to others, “*Optarem equidem regimen Episcopale bene temperatum, et ab omni injusta dominatione sejunctum, quale apud nos obtinet, et, siquid ego in his rebus sapiam, ab ipso Apostolorum ævo in Ecclesia receptum fuerit, et ab iis omnibus [Ecclesiis reformatis, scilicet] fuisset retentum. . . . Interim absit ut ego tam ferrei pectoris sim, ut ob ejusmodi defectum (sic mihi absque omni invidia appellare liceat) aliquas eorum a communione nostra abscindendas credam; aut cum quibusdam furiosis apud nos Scrip-*

regarded as an institution universal and permanent.

We may notice also, with reference to this subject, a striking instance of the light which the history of the Church is occasionally calculated to throw on points in the scriptural narrative, there briefly adverted to, rather than distinctly explained. Thus in the account given in the Acts, of the proceedings of the great Council of the Apostles at Jerusalem^m, we might be perplexed at observing the presidency conceded to St. James above the other members of that body, many of whom might have appeared to us more generally distinguished; but the seeming difficulty will at once vanish, when we find it established, by the fullest historical testimony, that he bore the authority of Bishop in that city, and therefore must have claimed officially the station of president within his own diocese.

toribus, eas nulla vera ac valida sacramenta habere, adeoque vix Christianos esse pronuntiem." Letter from Archbishop Wake to Le Clerc. Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. Append. III. No. xix.

* Acts xv.

Still we cannot fail to recognize many minor differences between the earlier discipline of the Church and that which still remains; and this is particularly striking in the more direct interference during the primitive ages, of the lay members of the congregation, in the elections of Bishops and Presbyters. We have already noticed allusions to this effect in the writings of Clemens Romanus and Cyprian; but we would refer any one who may wish to see a complete collection of the evidence bearing on this subject, to that invaluable storehouse of ecclesiastical antiquityⁿ, the *Origines* of Bingham.

ⁿ Bingham, l. iv. c. 11. sect. 2, 3, 10. Bingham here produces many authorities to shew, that the power of the people on such occasions was not barely testimonial, but judicial and elective; that in the appointment of Bishops they exercised exactly the same consent, suffrage, veto, election, and choice, as the inferior Clergy; and the same privilege was likewise on some occasions conceded to them in the designation of Presbyters.

The testimony of Cyprian is very important on these points. In the sixty-seventh Epistle, p. 172. he strongly insists, that the whole analogy of the appointment of the priesthood under the older covenant, and every order of ministers under the new, demonstrated

Thus has the survey, proposed as the subject of these Lectures, been conducted, however imperfectly, to its destined close. A brief summary of the general impression derived from it may occupy our concluding observations.

The writings we have examined assert their principal claim to our regard and study, not merely from the deference due to the individual characters of their authors ; although high deference to the piety of saints, and constancy of martyrs, can never surely deserve to be stigmatized as the symptom of a sickly and superstitious enthusiasm ; but we do not desire to look on these writings, as we have already observed, so much in their individual as in their collective capacity ; in order that we may endeavour to elicit from the careful collation of their concurrent testimony, the *ordinationes sacerdotales non nisi sub populi assistentis conscientia fieri oportere ; ordinatio justa et legitima est, quæ omnium suffragio et judicio fuerit examinata ;* and he himself apologises (Ep. 33.) for having been under the pressure of the times of persecution obliged to ordain a very meritorious individual by his own single authority, without having had an opportunity thus to consult the Church.

general sentiments of the primitive Church. In proportion as we may hope that we have succeeded in this research, and have recovered under its authentic form the doctrinal system attested by this early and catholic sanction, we shall be entitled to demand for the results obtained, the fullest and most attentive examination.

For the doctrinal system presented to us under the authority of this early testimony, must of necessity carry on its front the very strongest *prima facie* presumption, that it does indeed form a genuine portion of the faith once delivered to the saints. Thus far, early tradition may be considered to perform a very important office, as *suggesting* forms of doctrine to our attention; but it is one thing to suggest, and quite another to decide as judge, on the validity of those suggestions. And this higher office we regard as competent to the inspired Scriptures alone. The Fathers propose to us certain doctrines; we should listen with humility, but yet not so as to abandon our bounden duty of examining for ourselves the Scriptures, whether these things be so or no.

Early ecclesiastical tradition may illustrate and explain particular passages in the Bible, but the Bible itself must ever remain the original, supreme, and only authoritative teacher. No subsequent tradition can be the test of Scripture, for that very Scripture must itself be the test of every subsequent tradition ; since in itself it forms the only absolutely indisputable record of apostolical tradition, and must ever assert its own priority both in time and rank, as the great standard ; from agreement with which alone can any thing else be esteemed as truly primitive and catholic. All our dependence on the chain of tradition must fail, unless we have full reason to rely on the continuity of its connections, and the security of its first links ; and how can this be determined, unless we can satisfactorily ascertain, that those first links are firmly attached to the sure support, which the Apostles themselves have rivetted, in the very key-stones of the Church they were rearing to the Lord, as the compacting bonds of its imperishable structure.

Keeping this connection and dependence

constantly in our view, we shall be guided to the best use of every other record of Christian antiquity which has descended to us, and be preserved from the danger of abuse. Comparison with the spirit of the Bible will at once shew how far we may safely depend on them, and how far human infirmity may, even at an early period, have introduced any seeds of error and corruption.

With these feelings then, with respectful reverence, but not with indiscriminate submission, would we listen to such authorities ; we would give our best attention to the doctrines they propound, but entirely refer the decision of every point to an higher and more competent tribunal ; we would gratefully accept their very valuable subsidiary aid in illustrating, explaining, and corroborating the rule of our faith, but never for a moment so mistake their nature and station, as to place them on the same level with that rule, or concede to them any independent or coordinate jurisdiction.

But it must be ever most satisfactory to sum up our concluding observations in the very words of our own venerated Church ;

and that I may leave her judgment and her practice finally impressed on your minds, I will now cite from her Homilies the passage which most expressly illustrates that judgment and practice °.

“ Although our Saviour Christ taketh not and needeth not any testimony of men ; and that which is once confirmed by the certainty of his eternal truth, hath no more need of the confirmation of man’s doctrine and writings, than the bright sun at noon-tide hath need of the light of a little candle, to put away darkness and to increase his light ; yet, for your *further contentation*, it shall be declared, that this truth taken out of the holy Scriptures was believed and taught of the old holy Fathers, and most ancient learned Doctors, and received in the old primitive Church, which was most uncorrupt and pure.” And such a satisfaction it must surely afford to every well-constituted mind, to find its own best judgment of scriptural doctrine corroborated and confirmed by the concurrent interpretations of that doctrine by those who were among its

° Part II. Hom. against Idolatry.

first promulgators, and who subscribed their testimony to its truth with their life's blood.

But I would not thus conclude a theological discussion, without remembering, that theology is the *science of religion*; a science which, to be pursued properly and profitably, must ever be entered upon in a truly *religious spirit*; and so as to keep our hearts as well as our minds, not only in the *knowledge* but in the *love* of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ill shall I have discharged my duty to the Church, if in addressing on such subjects so large and so influential a body of her rising sons as are collected within these walls, I shall have led any to consider these things as affording the materials of hard and unfeeling dogmatism, or captious criticism. While with our Church we justly maintain the supreme and sole jurisdiction of Scripture in matters of faith, let us never imagine, that we shew a sincere regard for that Scripture, if we content ourselves with dryly and unconcernedly upholding its authority as a mere topic of controversial argument; but let us receive it into the inmost

recesses of an honest heart. Let us shew that we indeed prize the glorious light of the divine Gospel, not by mere profession, but by the devotion of our best intellectual powers to its contemplation, and of all our moral faculties to its effectual reception.

And in the same spirit let us survey the venerable remains of those who were the Fathers of our faith, the eldest among many brethren in the Church of our Lord. Let us look back with respectful gratitude on these our first forerunners in the Christian course, who having received when newly kindled the lamp of evangelical light, have through a long succession handed it down to ourselves^p. Let us not fancy that we evince a due respect for such holy men, and the works they have bequeathed to the Church, merely by magnifying their importance as objects of literary and antiquarian research; but let us rather endeavour so to pursue their study, that we may rise from it having derived the full benefit of their spirit

^p Καθάπερ λαμπάδα παραδίδοντας ἄλλοις ἐξ ἄλλων. Plato de Legg. VI.

and example, desirous to become followers of them even as they were followers of the Lord ; animated by the same devotion, supported by the same faith, heirs together with them of the same hope. And seeing that we also are encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us be encouraged to pursue with greater patience the race set before us, whether of moral or intellectual exertion, whether of religious endurance or religious investigation. Yet let us not rest on these human witnesses alone, but let us rather be directed by their testimony, to fix a stronger and steadier regard on their Lord and our Lord. Ever, as in all things, so especially in those studies which have his truth for their object, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 117. line penult. *for* peto *read* puto

—— 169. — 6, note, *for* SEMONI SANCTO *read* SEMONI SANCO

—— 397. — 5, from bottom, *for* Valerius *read* Valerian

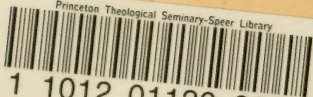
—— 434. — 6, from bottom, *for* Paternas *read* Paternus







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